





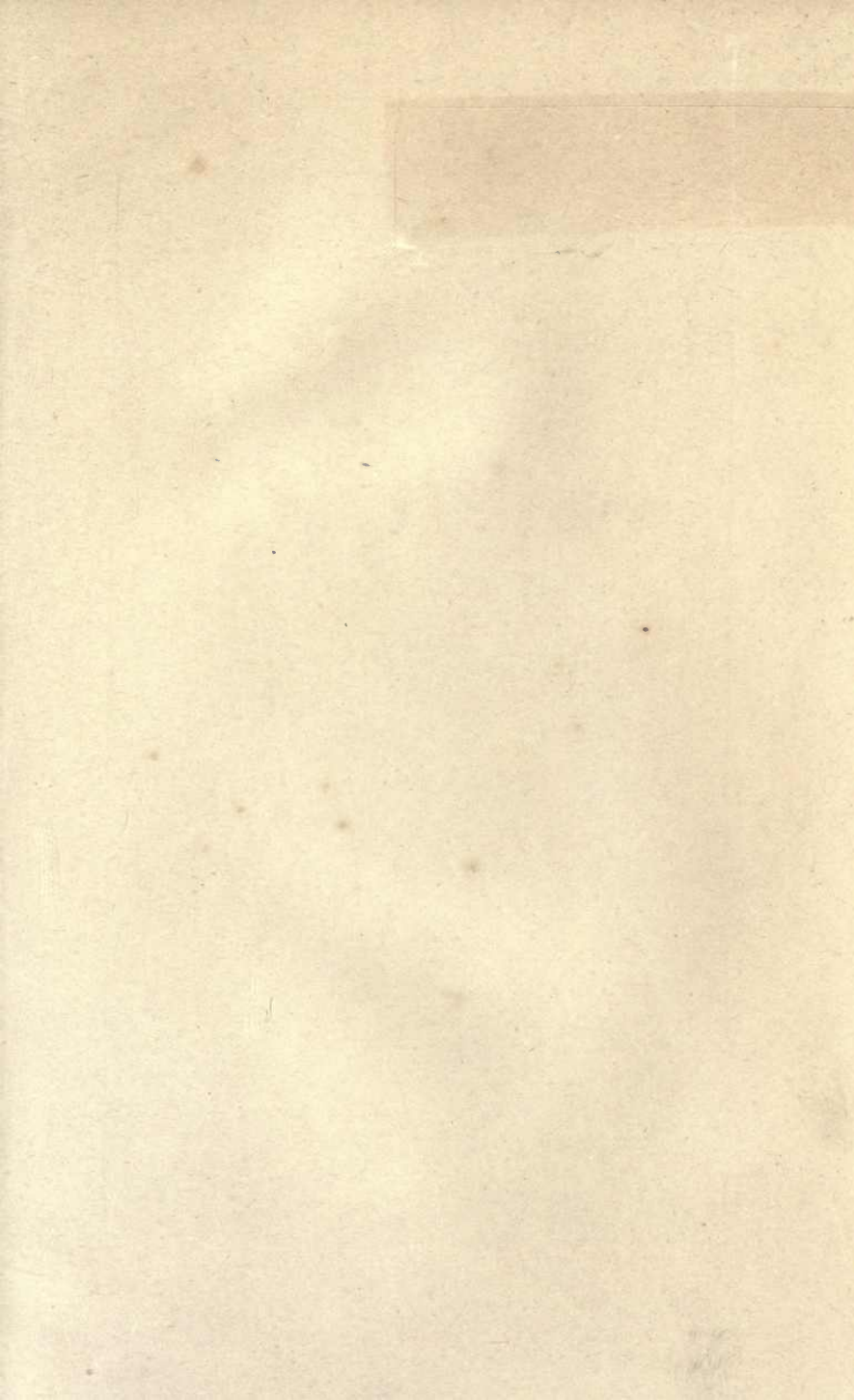
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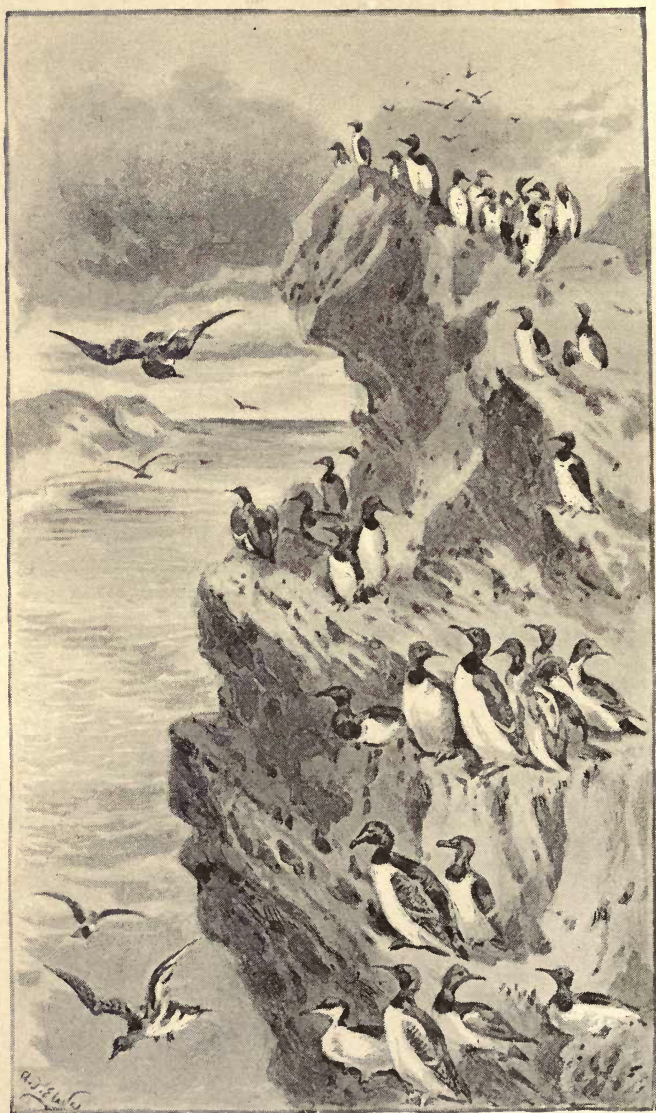
PRESENTED BY
PROF. CHARLES A. KOFOID AND
MRS. PRUDENCE W. KOFOID

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THE BIRDS OF OUR RAMBLES







THE
BIRDS OF OUR RAMBLES

A Companion for the Country

BY
CHARLES DIXON,

AUTHOR OF
"RURAL BIRD LIFE," "EVOLUTION WITHOUT NATURAL SELECTION,"
"OUR RARER BIRDS," "ANNALS OF BIRD LIFE," "IDLE HOURS WITH NATURE,"
"STRAY FEATHERS FROM MANY BIRDS," ETC.
PART AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF BRITISH BIRDS."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. T. ELWES.

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PLEASE BE OUR KAMBERS

THE NEW YORK

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PREFACE.

THE present little volume must be looked upon as an introduction to the study of Field Ornithology, rather than as an exhaustive treatise on the habits of Birds. It has been written with the earnest endeavour to supply what I believe to be a wide-felt want—a handy book about British Birds, so arranged that these creatures may be readily identified in the various haunts they affect. In a subject of this nature the identification of the species is the most important item; and this I have tried to render easy by directing the observer's attention to whatever is most likely to attract his notice, or to be impressed upon his mind—the notes, the general appearance, or peculiarity of habit, being seized upon to introduce the birds to him. Then, having once done that, I have sought still further to stimulate his interest in them by supplying some of the most salient features in the economy of each. The vast extent of the subject prevents much detail being given; but I venture to assert that when the student has mastered the information furnished he cannot fail from being fairly well

conversant with the habits, notes, and appearance of the birds that regularly inhabit our country.

Of the pleasure derived during the process of acquiring this information concerning our feathered friends, it would be impossible to speak with any exaggeration of its intensity. Of all living creatures that in the wilds do dwell, Birds appeal most forcibly to our notice. They are the most *apparent* wild creatures of our rambles, and not only so, they are universal in their distribution. No description of scenery is devoid of Birds; they are alike the life of the wilderness, and the charm of more homely country.

The labour of designing and writing the following pages has been no light one; but if it be the humble means of drawing a few fresh students within the charmed circle of Field Ornithology—if it be the means of smoothing away some of the difficulties that beset the novice, then that labour will ever be recalled as a genuine pleasure. With the cordial hope that the reader may experience both pleasure and profit by the perusal, I now leave the “Birds of our Rambles” to his sympathetic consideration.

CHARLES DIXON.

6, *Ingatestone Terrace,*
Warren Road, Torquay.

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THE BIRDS OF OUR RAMBLES.

INTRODUCTORY.

THERE can be no doubt whatever that the steadily increasing popularity of Natural History, the constantly spreading taste for seeing and studying the wondrous works of Nature, is almost exclusively due to the ease with which such pleasant pursuits may now be indulged in. Twenty years ago we had few guides to conduct us through the woods and fields, and explain their wonders to us; whilst inducements to take up this or that branch of outdoor science were small. Nowadays the student is furnished with accurate and brightly written handbooks to almost every branch of natural knowledge, which not only enable him to note and investigate with intelligence, but stimulate him to original work, and render his rambles fruitful in personal observation. No longer are the insects, the flowers, and the trees so many nameless objects; each may now, under some author-naturalist's guidance, be identified, their habits told, their uses explained. But, curiously enough, we have not a single intelligible guide to the most attractive creatures

of all—the Birds that flit to and fro around us, or make our wanderings in the wilderness glad with their song. Books on Birds are plentiful enough, some of them reliable, the work of men famous for their knowledge; others the compilations of writers whose Ornithology is weak. Most of these works are too large and too cumbersome to make outdoor companions of; none are handy enough for ready reference at the moment when some possibly unknown bird appears, and the ignorant observer is anxious to identify it at once, and learn some particulars of its habits and economy. Many are the fascinating volumes dealing with the fauna of the woods and fields, and the wonders of the shore; yet in all the Birds only receive passing notice, and just the information required is either omitted altogether, or becomes useless because it is not easy of reference.

Now, with regard to Birds. I am often asked by would-be observers what birds are to be met with in such and such a locality. “I expect to visit the moors:” “I am going for a stroll in the woods;” or “We are off to the coast”—just as the case may be—“Now what birds am I likely to meet with there?” are remarks I have had addressed to me times without number by friends and acquaintances, whose knowledge of Ornithology has been *nil*, although they have been fired with the wish to know the birds they might meet with, and were anxious not only to name them, but to learn all about them. Or, on the other hand, I have been repeatedly buttonholed by some aspiring bird-lover, who having been his rambles among the birds comes back full of information

concerning the doings of this bird or that, and is eager to know the names and more about the habits of species that have impressed themselves upon his mind. This oft-repeated catechising has resulted in the present volume.

The two great things to be aimed at in a work of this kind are ready means of identification and judicial assignment of species to localities where they are most characteristic. A man with little or absolutely no knowledge of birds wants to be able quickly to identify them as they come before him; and before going for his ramble it is therefore always best to learn what species are likely to be found—to gain some knowledge of their notes and appearance which will make the task of determining them a mere rehearsal of what he has already committed to memory. To obtain this necessary information means wading through entire volumes, and even then it will be of little practical service. The following chapters furnish the required knowledge. I have divided my pages into eleven rambles, which embrace every kind of scenery—from the mountain-top to the rock-bound coast or sandy shore; from the bare moors to the deep shady woods; from the fields and downs to the gardens and shrubberies; from the homesteads and highways to the hedgerows and the rocks; from mountain pools and streams to lowland Broads and lakes.

Here, among these diversified haunts, all the wild birds of our country may be met with (the rare and accidental visitors, of course, being omitted); but in studying these birds the observer must always bear in mind the following facts. Birds are constantly changing their ground, and

haunts frequented at one season are deserted at another. Most birds are migratory ; even if they do not quit our islands entirely, a very considerable journey is undertaken by many birds from one district to another. Thus some species winter on our low-lying shores and breed in the far north of Scotland ; others frequent the coasts in winter and repair to the moors in summer ; some are more arboreal and solitude-loving in summer, more homely in winter ; with others a strongly marked movement takes place, and the wilder country is deserted for more cultivated districts at that period. Again, even among our commonest birds, a great change of habitat is noticeable according to season. In winter some of these species habitually frequent the open fields which in summer are not usually found upon them ; others desert these places and betake themselves to shrubberies and woods. All these little facts must be borne in mind by the reader of the following pages, who will find them alluded to in greater detail as the several species are dealt with. So far, therefore, as practicable I have made the birds that breed in each locality, or those that frequent them regularly in winter, the most representative species. But then there are many birds that dwell in several of these haunts. For instance, we may find the Blackbird in the shrubbery, the hedgerow, the highway, or the garden, or even on the moors ; we may note the Robin in the woods and the Magpie in the orchard, the Jay in the garden and the Willow Wren in the lanes and coppices. It is absolutely impossible to lay down a hard-and-fast rule for the habitat of many species ; but it may be re-

marked that certain localities are always, in hunting parlance, a "safe find" for the birds I have included. Again, at the end of each "ramble" I have been careful to specify all these what we may aptly class as "intruding species." On the other hand, there are birds that stamp their individuality on certain haunts, rarely or never wandering from them. The Red Grouse and the Ring Ousel are birds of the moors alone; the Ptarmigan ever keeps to the mountain-tops, the Rock Pipit to the coast, the Guillemots and Razorbills to the ocean cliffs, the Eagles to the Highland hills.

The observer will also find, especially during the periods of the spring and autumn migration, certain places swarming with birds that are seldom or never seen in them at any other time. Coast birds then visit inland waters; field and woodland birds the coast, on their way to usual haunts. Many a time, for instance, the wilderness-loving Peregrine takes up his quarters in a crowded city, spreading terror through all the dovecots and poultry-runs; and during long-protracted frosts and snowy weather, numbers of birds are driven from accustomed habitats to districts where food may be obtained. Perhaps it may be thought that many species have been included in this volume that have small claim to be regarded "birds of our rambles." But I have always tried to err on the side of inclusion rather than of omission; for nothing is more disappointing to a student than to search his handbook in vain for an account of some rarer species of which fortune may have favoured him with a glimpse.

A word now as to the identification of birds. This is always the one grand stumbling-block over which the novice comes to grief. "Whatever could that bird have been?" "What species is that?" are oft-repeated exclamations to himself as he walks along. Even the after aid of a more skilful ornithologist is of little avail; for nothing is more difficult than to endeavour to name a bird from the vague description given of it by an amateur. It is, however, worse than useless to give a long minute description which the student must follow in bewildering detail, with the bird itself in his hand, to render it of service. Besides, he who is anxious to study the ways of birds, does not wish to destroy these pretty creatures, for their greatest charm vanishes with life. I have endeavoured to overcome as much of this difficulty of, and drawback to personal observation as possible, by giving as close an imitation of the call-notes of the birds met with, as can be given in a written description or expressed in words. Or, in addition to this, in many cases the peculiarities of plumage have been described as tersely as possible; a rough likeness of the bird, as it fitfully appears at a distance where all the smaller details of its colours are lost. The actions of many species render identification easy; and wherever these little peculiarities are sufficiently marked to be of service I have availed myself of this means of introducing my birds to the observer's notice. At the end of each "ramble," a list of the species met with arranged in order of sequence will also, I hope, help the student to acquire a rapid knowledge of birds; for here may be found at a glance their call-notes, whether they are

migratory or resident (in the sense of crossing the seas), and if the former the period of their stay with us ; together with the prevailing colours of their plumage.

With an only too vivid remembrance of the difficulties I met with in my early days among the birds, I have sought to make the present work as practical and full of assistance as possible. I can recall to mind, even after the lapse of five-and-twenty years, the obstacles that beset me, and the many difficulties I had to overcome before I became even tolerably expert in field ornithology. My library was almost limited to Waterton's charming "Essays," and his still more charming "Wanderings"—books that never failed to fascinate me more and more each time I opened them. With White's "Selborne," Jardine's "Naturalist's Library," and Yarrell's more ambitious volumes, I was also familiar ; yet in none of these books could I find just the exact help I wanted—consequently my knowledge had to be slowly acquired by personal experience ; and very proud I used to feel as bird after bird became known to me, and I was able to name the different species with whose habits I was already well acquainted.

A word as to the geographical distribution of the "birds of our rambles." It need scarcely be remarked that upon the locality in which they are taken depends a great deal the species that will be met with. For instance, no matter how closely we may search the western and northern woods, we shall never meet with the Nightingale in them ; or however much we seek on southern coasts for the Eider Duck during the breeding

season, we shall seek in vain. We may ramble through woods in one part of the country and never find birds that are common enough in these situations in another part. Our rambles, then, must be undertaken with a certain amount of discrimination. It is not fair, however, to suppose that the student is posted up in the distribution of British birds generally, and therefore I have appended, in a marginal note, a rough idea of the bird's geographical habitat in our islands, so that the reader, as each species is dealt with, may see at a glance whether his own district is likely to be favoured with the presence of that bird or not. I ought just to add that the expression "widely distributed" means that the species may be met with almost universally throughout the British Islands in all suitable districts. The expression "English type" means birds that are fairly dispersed over England and Wales in suitable localities, but are absent from Scotland or Ireland, or only known there as very rare or accidentally. Where the word "principally" is used, it implies that the bird is found in Scotland, but much more locally than in England. When "eastern" is added, it means that the bird is absent from, or rare in Wales, and becomes much rarer in the extreme S.W. or W. of England.

As regards the mere pleasures of these rambles, it would be difficult indeed to overestimate them. If Birds be the object of our quest, our rambles never need be lonely and profitless. By sea and shore, this feathered company is ever engaging. The little Wren, carolling his song among the bushes, is just as charming to me as the Eagle on the mountains; I can find as much pleasure with

the homely birds in park and garden, as with those of more distinguished presence and greater rarity. Birds are always interesting, always beautiful, and always present. Go where we will, ramble where we may, the birds are ever with us, in air, on earth and sea. No matter what the time or season, the interest of their movements never wanes. Be it the season of their courtship or the hour of their song, the days of their nest-building or the period of their family cares, the time of their journeys to and fro, their comings and their goings, singly and silent, or in noisy throng, by daylight or by darkness, it is ever the same, their actions and their handiwork fascinate and charm us more than those of any other living things.

I should here just like to remark that no amount of book-reading will give the student much practical knowledge of birds. He must supplement his reading with his own observations, with his own constant and sympathetic scrutiny of birds at all times and seasons; for it is only then that the wonderful charm of Ornithology is realised. The ways of birds are well enough when put on paper, but this reflection of their habits is but a sorry substitute for the personal observation of them, no matter however cunning and skilful the pen may be that essays to describe them. Regular and constant observation, therefore, is necessary to acquire a knowledge of birds' habits. I remember years ago I used to go my rambles after knowledge so regularly that the farmers in the fields set their time by me. "There goes Mr. Dixon;" "it's drinking-time," "dinner-time," or "milking-time," as the case might be, according

to the part of the fields I was crossing. By keeping good time with the birds, I found out that they kept good time with me, and were regular, too—marvellously regular in their habits; and to this patient, dogged perseverance in my observations I attribute whatever knowledge I may possess of the ways and doings of my feathered friends. “Rome was not built in a day.” A practical knowledge of Ornithology is not gained in a year, it is the work of a lifetime; and I only fear that the busiest of us will leave far more undone at the close of even a long life than we have ever accomplished by the most constant care and unwearying observation. And this, in spite of the supremely ignorant remark of a still more supremely ignorant reviewer, that “it is now scarce possible to discover anything new about the four hundred sorts (*sic*) of British birds.” Could crass, impudent imposition on public credulity go further? So far the reviewer in the *Scots Observer*—alias the *National Observer*—a paper that so far forgot its dignity as to apply for a review copy of one of my books (when they found that none had been sent), yet only to pelt it with literary garbage, to which the writer was either ashamed or afraid to append his signature. With these few introductory remarks, we will now proceed to study in detail the “Birds of our Rambles.”



RAMBLE I.

ROUND ABOUT THE HOMESTEADS, THE HIGHWAYS, AND THE ROCKS.

OUR first ramble may be not inaptly devoted to the common birds that dwell around and on our houses, and that hop about the highways near them. Even in such homely spots ornithological study may be pursued with pleasure and with advantage—the economy of the birds that dwell in such close companionship with us is by no means completely known, much remains to be discovered. These half-domesticated birds are also endeared to us by old associations; they are the friends of our childhood, and the daily companions of more mature years. Their merry notes, their glad, sweet songs, their comings and their goings, their ways at this season and at that, their trustfulness, and their attachment to our dwelling-places, all help to endow them with no ordinary interest.

Undoubtedly the one bird most intimately associated with our houses and highways is the SPARROW (*Passer domestica*). Even while I write these words the little brown rascals just outside the window are chirping notes of confirmation, and,

Commonly
distributed.

as it were, emphatically endorsing my assertion. The House Sparrow is the one bird attached to man ; he has followed him like a faithful retainer all the world over. Indeed, the geographical distribution of the Sparrow tells the story of civilisation and the spread of colonisation, more eloquently, more exactly, more concisely than any other thing. And yet, in spite of his centuries of residence at our threshold, and notwithstanding his abundance, I doubt if any living man knows the exact changes of plumage which this bird undergoes between the nestling and adult stages of existence ! And yet we are told that British Ornithology is played out, that it is an exhausted field ! Believe me, dear reader, we have yet to learn more than we already know, concerning even such a common bird as the House Sparrow ! All the year round this bird frequents our habitations even in the grimmest of cities, the noisiest of towns, although a considerable movement takes place in autumn, when great numbers leave these situations and visit the grain fields. The House Sparrow is one of the most gregarious and social of birds, and lives in colonies of varying size, according to the extent of the accommodation offered, and the amount of food to be obtained in the vicinity. It will be remarked that the note of the Sparrow becomes more musical in February ; the birds are then about to pair, and will soon be making love. I ought rather to say the lonely and the young birds, for there can be no doubt that the Sparrow pairs for life, and yearly uses the same nesting-place, often sleeping in the old nest at night all the winter through. The Sparrow is one of the most prolific of birds, beginning to

breed as early as February, and continuing to do so all through the year up to October. Eggs of this species have been found during every month of the twelve. As may easily be remarked, this bird builds two very distinct types of nest. The commonest type is in buildings, rocks, and hollow trees, every nook that can hold a nest being utilised in turn ; the other type is placed in the branches of trees and amongst ivy. These two nests are very different in construction, although similar materials are used for both—dry grass, straws, cotton, twine, hemp, wool, hair, feathers, paper, and rags being among the most usual things employed. The nest in a hole is little more than a heap of this rubbish, the warmest and softest materials being used for lining ; but the nest in the branches is well and skilfully woven, firmly fixed in its resting-place, domed, with an aperture in the top or side where the birds enter. Grass and straws are the usual material of the outer part, and the inside is lined with an amazing quantity of feathers. The entrance hole is always a mystery to me, and generally found with the greatest difficulty. Indeed, it seems as though the birds possessed some mystic means of entrance, or were always careful to shut their door behind them. Many and many a time have I been compelled to tear a nest to pieces before I could get at the eggs. Every one is aware of the slovenliness of the nest of this bird ; and very often it is betrayed by the long straws left dangling out of the hole. The eggs of the Sparrow are four or five in number, and present considerable variation. They range from bluish white to grayish brown in ground colour, more or

less thickly mottled, spotted, and blotched with varying shades of brown and gray. In summer, vast flocks of Sparrows frequent the hay meadows to live on the seeds of grass and weeds ; and then, as the autumn comes on, the birds, in ever-increasing numbers, devote their unwelcome attentions to the grain-fields, where the damage they do is more than serious. Insects and their larvæ are also eaten by the Sparrow, as well as any refuse it can find near our houses, and farm-yards, and on the highways. Every one who has observed the Sparrow can bear testimony to its pugnacious disposition. It always seems ready for a rough-and-tumble fray, and the moment two birds fall out the battle begins to get general, Sparrows flying from everywhere to join in the noisy strife, which often ceases as suddenly as it commenced. We might devote our entire ramble to gossip about the House Sparrow, but with these few remarks we must pass on, although with the observation that he is constantly to be seen on the highways picking about anywhere and everywhere, and even repairing to the dry roads to dust himself.

Widely
distributed.

Another bird as interesting as he is also a dweller on the homesteads, and this is the STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*). The Starling is one of my favourite birds ; his glossy purple and brown plumage, his sprightly ways, his harmless life, the regularity of his movements, and his lively song, all endearing him to me. This bird needs but few words of introduction here. Our attention is usually first attracted to the Starling by his song. A glance upwards generally reveals the bird standing on a chimney-pot, or at the top

of the cross or point at the crown of the gable, or even on the ledge of the roof or the drainpipe, where with puffed-out plumage and trembling wings he reels forth his curious notes. His voice is perennial. All the year through, with the exception of the moulting season, he may be heard indulging in song, but this is certainly the sweetest and most continuous in early spring. Like most life-paired birds, the Starling visits its nesting-place from time to time throughout the non-breeding season. He unfailingly begins to do so in January, appearing on the roofs and the dead branches of trees near his nest-hole every morning with clock-like regularity, staying for a time to sing, and then disappearing altogether, probably until the morrow, when the same routine is repeated. The Starling is also a very gregarious bird, flocking all the year round, and breeding in societies of greater or less extent, according to the facilities offered. It is also much attached to a nesting-site, and will even take possession of a box nailed to the wall or tree for its benefit; no bird is more easily encouraged or difficult to drive away. It is an early breeder, sometimes beginning to build in March, but more regularly in May. The nest may be found in a great variety of places, but always in holes and crevices well protected from the external air. Holes in walls and trees, nooks and crannies under eaves, dovecots, church towers, and fissures in the rocks, are all frequented by this bird. It makes a rude nest of straws, dry grass, and a few feathers, but often enough the latter are absent. The four or five eggs are rather elongated in form, and pale greenish blue in colour, without markings. There

still appears to be much doubt as to the Starling being double-brooded; and persons favourably situated for the purpose would confer a favour on naturalists by recording their own individual experience. As soon as the young are hatched, the old birds may be seen visiting the nest every few minutes with worms which they obtain from the nearest grass lands. All the droppings of the young are also carried away with scrupulous cleanliness. When fledged, these young birds possess none of the brilliant glossy plumage which characterises their parents, being almost uniform brown; the adult dress is assumed after the first autumn moult; and even before this is completed the young males may often be heard engaged in song. The food of the Starling consists largely of worms, slugs, and grubs, for which it searches the pastures assiduously. Few sights are prettier than a flock of feeding Starlings, the birds nimbly running to and fro, and every now and then taking short flights in their eager quest. If frightened, the entire flock rise together with amazing promptness, and after a wheel or two, again alight in another part of the pasture to renew their search. As soon as the earliest broods are fledged, the Starling becomes even more gregarious, and its gatherings get larger and larger as the summer advances. Generally the Starlings in each neighbourhood have a recognised trysting-place, where every evening the flocks unite into a vast assembly upon the tree-tops, keeping up a noisy clamour until roosting time. Very often the gathering will break up into two companies at dusk, each going off to a chosen sleeping-place, but before doing

so indulging in a series of evolutions as beautiful as they are curious.

Almost as closely associated with the homesteads as the Sparrow and the Starling, we must now dwell briefly on the Swallows and the Swift. In Yorkshire and Derbyshire it is considered a good omen for the "Swallows" to fix on the homestead for a nesting-place, and few are the people that will seek to drive the little creatures away. Perhaps the commonest species is the HOUSE MARTIN (*Chelidon urbica*), distinguished from the Swallow by its white rump and shorter tail. It arrives in April and departs in September or October. It is eminently a gregarious bird, and all through the period of its stay is seen in gatherings of varying size. Numbers of its nests are also placed close together. Few things are more pleasing in the spring than to note the return of this pretty, harmless bird to its old haunts. There, high up in the blue sky, it may be seen, flitting to and fro the livelong day, or paying fitful visits to its nest under the eaves.

Widely
distributed.

The Martin pairs for life, and each year the old nest is used for family purposes. In May the little birds are busy enough, some repairing their old nests, others building new ones. The Martin's home is one of the most curious of all our British nests, and none are exposed more openly. It is made under the eaves, the copings, or chimney ledges, at the side of windows, on palaces and cottages, and even on the rocks, with no attempt at concealment whatever, just as though the little architects were well aware that they were safe from molestation. To the honour of the British urchin, who is only too prone to

indulge in stone-throwing mischief, let it be stated that the Martins are rarely disturbed, even when their nests are placed under the eaves of houses by the side of the highway. The shell of their nest is made of little bits of mud, built up in layers, piece by piece, and obtained from the puddles in the roads, or the banks of ponds and rivers. A small hole at the top serves for the entrance. This mud-formed nest is then lined with dry grass and feathers, many of which are snatched up when blown into the air, by the Martins as they skim to and fro. The four or five eggs are pure and spotless white. Any one fortunate enough to have Martins' nests upon his premises need never be at a loss for amusement during the breeding season of these birds. They are a constant source of interest, flitting to and from their nests, and their lively twittering notes are very pleasant to the ear. In early summer the males are often heard to warble their short yet varied song, often when sitting on a roof, less frequently when flying up and down.

Widely
distributed.

Almost as familiar as the Martin, the BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) is perhaps even more of a favourite. It may always be known by its steel-blue upper plumage and long acutely forked tail. To the unorthodox both birds are known indiscriminately as "Swallows," and are generally alluded to as such. In its habits the Swallow differs very little from its ally. Like that bird, its province is the air. It is also a life-paired species, and returns yearly to an old haunt; it feeds on insects, like the Martin; it possesses the same habit of warbling during flight, and is equally gregarious. In the matter of its domestic arrange-

ments, however, it differs considerably, and always prefers a covered site for its nest. This is generally in a shed, a barn, or an outhouse, or even a wide old-fashioned chimney. I have often known the bird select a site under an archway or in a passage. The Swallow is just as trustful as the Martin, perhaps even more so, and will sometimes make its nest within reach of the hand of every passer-by. The nest is more open than the Martin's, yet composed of similar materials—a shell of mud, lined with dry grass and feathers. The eggs are four or five in number, white in ground colour, spotted and blotched with coffee-brown and violet-gray. The Swallow begins nesting in May, and the young are abroad early in July. These latter are fed by their parents in the air for long after they leave the nest, whither, by the way, they usually repair at night to roost. I do not find that the Swallow ever uses the old nest twice, although the bird unerringly returns to the same shed or building, and makes a new one close by. The young male Swallows, readily identified by their shorter tails, are often heard to sing in autumn as they fly to and fro.

Popular opinion closely associates the SWIFT (*Cypselus apus*) with the Swallows, and certainly so far as habits and outward appearance go, there seems much in favour of the supposition. But the Swift is not a Passerine bird at all, and belongs to the great order *PICARIÆ*, a group which contains among others the Goatsuckers, the Kingfishers, the Woodpeckers, and the Humming Birds. Indeed, the Swift is more closely related to the latter than is generally supposed. The wide gape resembles that of the Swallows, but the

Widely distributed.

structure of the feet is very different, all the four toes being directed forwards; the claws are also very strong and sharp, enabling the bird to cling to rocks and buildings. The Swift is one of the latest of our summer migrants, not arriving at its old haunts before May. It stays with us but a short five months, and is off back again to Africa in September. The Swift, like the House Martin, is as frequently met with amongst rocks as amongst buildings. This bird is readily identified by its Swallow-like flight, nearly uniform blackish brown plumage, short tail, and long narrow scythe-shaped wings. You may also distinguish it by its loud hissing note, often uttered so harshly as apparently to make the air vibrate. No bird is more aërial in its habits. All the livelong day from dawn to dusk it keeps the air on untiring wing, skimming to and fro, and flying about with throbbing pinions that never seem to grow weary. Its sole food is insects; and beyond the notes already alluded to it does not possess any song. The Swift is a gregarious bird, and numbers of its nests may be found close together. These are either among the cracks and crannies of the rocks, or in church steeples and towers, ruins, castles, or even under the eaves of houses and cottages. When in rocks many of these nests are absolutely inaccessible, being made in narrow crevices many feet within the solid cliffs. It is very interesting to observe this bird dart downwards from the air and enter the nesting hole just like a bolt from the sky. The nest is simple enough, a few straws and feathers being all the provision made for the eggs. These are almost invariably two in number, very elongated and

pure white. The Swift is never seen to alight on the ground to gather nest materials, but seizes any straw or feather that may chance to be blown into the air; or, I often suspect, is guilty of confiscating part of the Sparrows' nests. It has been stated that the Swift is incapable of rising from a flat surface, but this is entirely erroneous, as may easily be proved by any one inclined to make the experiment.

In the outbuildings of the farm, in the old belfry of the village church, among the ivied ruins, or even in the large caves among the rocks, we may still commonly meet with the BARN OWL (*Strix flammea*). This pretty bird of night may be readily distinguished from all the other Owls by its pure white underparts and long, narrow face set with two piercing black eyes. It may also always be known by its loud, far-sounding hoot—enough to startle the most stolid person if heard at close quarters, say below the church tower at midnight, when the moon in ghostly radiance is lighting up the white tombstones. All day long you may find the Owl at home, blinking and dozing in his favourite corner, with the bats for his companions, waiting for dusk. Then, as the shadows darken and the twilight dies away, he rouses himself from his lethargy and becomes filled with activity and business. Forth he sallies with a loud screech of pleasure—forth to the neighbouring fields in quest of mice. All night long he is astir, flapping about on soft, noiseless wings, dropping down upon these unsuspecting creatures. To and fro he passes, in and out of the old tower or the barn, bringing food to his young ones or his mate. The Barn Owl pairs for life, and

Widely
distributed.

season by season nests in one favoured spot, which is generally its daily refuge for the remainder of the year. No nest is made, and the eggs are generally laid either upon the dusty bottom of the hole or upon the pellets of mice-skins thrown up by the birds. The eggs are three or four in number, about the size of a Pigeon's egg and perfectly white, though rough in texture and without gloss. When disturbed at the nest the old birds hiss and snap their beaks to show their displeasure at the intrusion. Two or more broods are reared in the year, the earliest eggs generally being laid in April and the latest in July and August. The Barn Owl moults very slowly during the months of July, August, and September. It is, perhaps, needless to add that this bird is a resident with us.

Widely
distributed.

Two species of the Crow tribe call for notice as we ramble below the rocks; but unfortunately for the naturalist only one of them, the JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*), is at all commonly distributed. He is much smaller than the Rook, and always easily distinguished by his slate-gray nape. The Jackdaw also frequents church towers, ivied ruins, hollow trees, the larger homesteads, and even sea-cliffs. I always, however, associate this bird with an inland cliff, perhaps because I saw so much of it in the limestone dales of the Peak. The Jackdaw, like the Rook, is gregarious all the year through, and builds in colonies. Like that bird it also much frequents the fields and pastures for the same kind of food, and its habits generally are very similar. The Jackdaw pairs for life, and the old breeding-places are tenanted yearly. The nest of this bird is always well sheltered in a hole

of some kind, and the bigger the cavity the bigger the nest will be. In some cases where the hole is small the merest rudiments of a nest will be found; but where it is made in a more spacious cavity a vast collection of sticks is accumulated. The nest proper is made of turf, dry grass, and moss, and lined with wool and feathers. The eggs are four or five in number, pale bluish green in ground colour, spotted and blotched with various shades of brown and gray. We shall meet with the Jackdaw again in our rambles across the fields (see p. 85).

Although during the breeding season it is only found amongst the rocks of the Highlands, the HOODED CROW (*C. cornix*) deserves passing notice. In more southern haunts he is a bird of autumn and winter only, and then frequents the coasts, where we shall notice his habits at that season (see p. 244). For the present we will be content with a peep at his domestic arrangements. At all seasons this bird is more gregarious than its cousin the Carrion Crow, with whom it habitually intermarries, especially abroad. His hoarse *cra* or *carruck* may often be heard in springtime from the beetling storr rocks and rugged glens. He pairs for life, and makes his bulky nest either on a platform of the rocks or even in a tree near by on the steep hillsides. The nest is very similar to that of the Rook, made of sticks, turf, grass, moss, wool, hair, and feathers, and the four or five eggs are absolutely indistinguishable from those of that species, being greenish blue or pale green in ground colour, variously spotted and blotched with greenish brown and gray. This bird is readily identified

Northern
and
western.
South in
Winter.

by its slate-gray back and underparts below the throat, the remainder of the plumage being similar to that of the Carrion Crow in colour.

There is also much of interest going on among the birds round about the homesteads, especially in winter. For then does not the neat, dainty ROBIN visit the doorsteps for his portion of scattered crumbs; and the HEDGE ACCENTOR forgets his retiring ways and comes out into the open, flitting about the barn-door, and in and out among the heaps of wood in the stackyard. Indeed, the latter place is a highly favoured haunt of birds, especially when the fields are deep in snow. There the BUNTINGS and the FINCHES congregate, picking up the scattered grain and frequenting the manure-heaps in a mixed and lively throng. Here in the short twilight of the winter evenings the noisy chirping SPARROWS congregate, sitting in rows upon the buildings and the trees behind the stables, dropping down singly or in twos and threes, one after the other, and nestling in the cosy sides of the hayricks or under the thatch of the cornstacks. And well into the dusk the tiny WREN, after chattering noisily enough for half an hour or more in the neighbouring hedge, flits quickly into the stack-side like a swirling leaf, into a safe and warm retreat even on the coldest nights. The ivy growing up the house-side is also another night retreat, and amongst its glossy perennial foliage not only Sparrows and other Finches nestle, but BLACK-BIRDS and THRUSHES and even TITMICE repair for shelter from the elements. Many exciting hours have I spent in netting these places at night—bat-fowling in the darkness to acquaint myself

with the species that roosted in them. Even now I can recall, across the wide space of vanished years, the pockets well filled with Wrens and Tits and GREENFINCHES, which after a minute examination were always allowed to wing their way unharmed; for I could never bring myself to take a mean advantage of them, and drag them from their cosy beds to kill them, even though specimens at the time were badly wanted. Many other birds, especially in winter, make their appearance round the homesteads; but as these are wanderers from their usual habitats, we must refrain from noticing them until we meet them at home in our future rambles.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
House Sparrow	Resident	Shrill <i>chirp</i>	Brown and gray; throat of male black
Starling . . .	Resident	Long harsh <i>chirp</i>	Dark metallic purple
House Martin .	April to October	Sharp shrill <i>prrt</i>	Bluish black and white
Swallow . . .	April to October	Shrill <i>whet</i>	Bluish black above, white below
Swift	May to September	Shrill <i>pir-r-r</i>	Blackish brown
Barn Owl . . .	Resident	Loud screech	Buff and gray above, white below
Jackdaw . . .	Resident	Cackling <i>caw</i> or <i>kok</i>	Black, nape gray
Hooded Crow .	October to March in England	Hoarse <i>caw</i>	Black, back and under-parts gray

RAMBLE II.

IN GARDEN, PARK, AND SHRUBBERY.

OUR rambles through the gardens, parks, and shrubberies will introduce us not only to some shy and retiring birds, but to many of our most homely species—those whose names are as household words to every dweller in the country. At all seasons of the year these spots are the chosen haunt of birds; we shall never find time hang heavy in them; summer and winter alike they swarm with a vast army of feathered folk, whose varying ways are ever a source of untold interest to him whose sympathies are awakened in the contemplation of the wondrous works of Nature.

England and
Ireland,
rarer north.

In many big shrubberies a fair number of forest trees occur, and here very often for time out of mind the ROOKS (*Corvus frugilegus*) have had their colony. The purplish black plumage of the Rook, and its gray warty face, are too well known to need further description. The big nests are easy enough to see all through the winter and the spring, until the deciduous foliage conceals them; but by that time the young are almost ready for flight. As we shall meet with the Rook elsewhere (see p. 85), for the present



we will content ourselves with a peep into those big wind-rocked nests. The Rook is one of the earliest birds to breed, beginning in favourable seasons at the end of February, although the poor birds often have to cease operations for a while owing to severe weather. The nests are used yearly, being patched up and cleaned each spring. Those blown out during the past year are renewed, but not always in the same exact spot. The nests are built of sticks cemented with mud and turf, and then lined with moss, wool, dry leaves, and feathers. They are rather flat, but surprisingly firm and compact. The eggs vary from three to five in number, and the normal colour is bluish green, spotted and blotched with greenish brown and gray. They vary considerably in size and form and colour. All through the laying and hatching season the Rooks are noisy, busy birds, and when their young are being reared, the bustle and tumult increase. Rooks are most gregarious birds, very regular in their movements, and at all seasons live in companies.

The next most prominent birds of these places are undoubtedly the Thrushes. No less than five of the half-dozen truly British species of these birds have their home and haunts therein, and, of these, three habitually rear their young within them. Perhaps the most noticeable of all is the BLACKBIRD (*Merula merula*), so well known by his glossy black plumage and orange-yellow bill as to need no further introduction. His loud and noisy cry when flushed from the evergreens, the garden, or the lawn, is too well known and too frequently heard to be mistaken for the note of any other species; and his incessant *pink-pink-*

Widely
distributed.

pink from the shrubberies, especially at dusk, never fails to tell the whereabouts of his roosting-place. How graceful he looks as he stands with elevated tail upon the grass-plots, fearful of danger; how quickly and lightly he hops to and fro in quest of the worms and grubs that compose his food! Then how slyly he visits the fruit-trees in summer, or with what boldness he plucks the clusters of scarlet holly berries when the ground is snow-covered or frozen, as if conscious that we shall not deem this an offence! He may be guilty of pilfering in the kitchen garden, but then he is of the greatest service amongst the cabbage beds; and I venture to assert that his ravages on the cherry-trees and berry bushes are amply recompensed by the noxious creatures he destroys, and by his glorious song in spring and early summer. I know of few more persistent songsters than the Blackbird; and in early spring he will sit and warble for hours together from one accustomed perch. The Blackbird is one of the first birds to succumb to the tender passions in the opening year, and is engaged in domestic duties often before the high March winds have ceased. The nest is made in the evergreens, the whitethorn bushes, on the banks among the primroses and bluebells, and less frequently in the branches of trees. Dry grass, moss, and leaves form the outer portion of the structure; then this cup is lined with a thick coating of mud, and after this another and final copious lining of finer grass is inserted, the whole when finished and dry being a very compact structure. In this the brown female lays her five or six eggs, greenish blue in ground colour, spotted and blotched with reddish brown and

gray. The eggs of this bird are subject to considerable variation, and may occasionally be found with scarcely any markings at all. The plaintive piping call-note of the male during the breeding season will be remarked. Blackbirds are the least gregarious of the Thrushes, and never flock, even in winter.

Our second best known species is the SONG THRUSH (*Turdus musicus*). ^{Widely distributed.} What visions of bloom-flecked fruit-trees and springtime gladness, of blue eggs and constant song, are awakened at the sound of its name! Verily I think, after all, our homely birds are the most interesting—happy associations linger round them unknown to shyer and rarer species! The Song Thrush is the first musician of the year, and the very earliest days of a changing season are rendered sweet by his charming song. Who does not know the brown bird with the thickly spotted tawny breast, sitting up there in the leafless trees singing his oft-repeated notes? No other bird is so careful to repeat each variation, trying note by note over and over again, as if loth to part with each sweet sound. Wherever we may find the Blackbird we may find the Song Thrush too; although in winter a marked migration of this bird takes place, and sometimes not one will be seen during the months of November and December. In its food and habits it also closely resembles its sable congener, although it is not so much of a berry or a fruit eater. Its nesting season begins even earlier than that of the Blackbird, and its finished home may be found by the first week in April. Precisely similar situations are sought, and the nest to a certain point closely resembles that of the

Blackbird. The great difference is in the lining. Both nests are made the same and of similar materials until the mud is inserted. Then, instead of dry grass, the Song Thrush lines her home with damp rotten wood, obtained from old fences and fallen branches, and on this the eggs are laid before it is dry. Indeed, the heat from the sitting bird usually bakes this cake of kneaded wood hard and solid as the incubation of the eggs progresses. These are four or five in number, a trifle smaller than the Blackbird's, and beautiful turquoise-blue, spotted chiefly at the larger end with blackish brown and pale gray. The Thrush sits closely, often with bill wide open; but when scared from her nest she generally becomes very noisy and demonstrative. Two broods are frequently reared during the season, but never in the same nest. The Thrush is not quite so solitary as the Blackbird, but never becomes what we can call gregarious.

Widely
distributed.

From the Song Thrush we pass to the MISSEL-THRUSH (*T. viscivorus*). He resembles the Song Thrush in general appearance, but his larger size, warier disposition, and the extreme harshness and persistency of his call-notes, are good points of distinction. Curiously enough he is silent when the other Thrushes are most full of music, and he warbles his loud, free song most frequently between the months of September and March. He is without exception the wariest of the Thrushes, most often seen flying about the trees in the park, and only drawing to the shrubberies and gardens when about to rear his young. During autumn and winter he is more or less gregarious, and is then often met with on the

fields, wandering from one district to another as the food supply may vary. But with the spring his errantry and his wariness forsake him, and with a trustfulness made the more remarkable by contrast with his former shyness he comes to our orchards and shrubberies, and builds his nest often in the most exposed and frequented situations. The Missel-thrush is a tree-builder, rarely making his home even in the larger bushes and shrubs. The nest, made early in April or even at the end of March, is the most beautiful of all the Thrushes' nests, is built of a variety of materials, from green chickweed and moss to grass and masses of wool. Like the nest of its congeners, it is lined first with mud and then with long fine grass, much of it green, and often a few twigs are woven in the rim to strengthen it. The eggs are invariably four in number, bluish green or pale buff in ground colour, spotted with reddish brown and gray. Nests of this bird may often be found as late as June; hence it is probable that two or more broods are reared yearly. The food of the Missel-thrush is very similar to that of the preceding species, but berries are more largely partaken of.

Our last two species are migrants. Of these the REDWING (*T. iliacus*) is certainly the best known and the most familiar. It is much smaller and grayer than the Song Thrush; the spots underneath are neither so large nor so boldly defined; whilst the very distinct pale eyestripe is also an easily observed characteristic. The chestnut-red flanks and axillaries, when they chance to be observed, are also unfailing marks of distinction. This little Thrush (the smallest

All
cultivated
districts.

All
cultivated
districts.

British species) is a great favourite of mine ; for its ways are so trustful and gentle, and it comes so regularly to a chosen haunt, remaining there the entire winter through, that the acquaintance ripens into friendship. On the other hand the FIELDFARE (*T. pilaris*) is a more restless species, and spends his winter in wandering up and down the country-side like a nomad, with no fixed dwelling-place. His slate-gray head, nape, and rump, dark wings and tail, streaked throat and breast, and dark flanks, all readily distinguish him from the other Thrushes. He is about the size of the Blackbird ; and his white axillaries are very conspicuous during flight. Both the Redwing and the Fieldfare are winter visitors to our islands, coming from the forests of Scandinavia in the late autumn days, their advent with us being a sure sign of the waning year. I always welcome the coming of these birds, especially the Redwings, for they take the places in park and shrubbery vacated by the summer birds of passage, already far across the southern seas. Both Redwings and Fieldfares migrate by night, and both are songless during their sojourn with us ; although the yelping cries of the Redwings, especially at dusk, and the *sak-sak* of the Fieldfares, are welcome sounds in the leafless trees or gloomy evergreens. The Redwing is the more gregarious, and during the entire winter lives in flocks, which have a settled rendezvous and roosting-place in the shrubbery. Both these birds feed on the various winter berries ; but of the two the Redwing does so the least, and generally when animal food is difficult to obtain, owing to a long-continued frost. The Redwing arrives here in

October, the Fieldfare early in November, and the former returns north again by the beginning of April, the latter a week or so earlier.

I feel confident in stating that probably in every garden hedge in the country, and even in suburban districts too, the little dull-plumaged HEDGE ACCENTOR (*Accentor modularis*) may be met with. Next to the Robin, the Hedge Accentor is one of my most favourite birds. He is the first bird of which I ever wrote a line, and from childhood has always been full of interest to me. His brown streaked upper plumage and gray throat and breast, together with his feeble and plaintive call-note of *peep-peep*, will serve to distinguish him. He sings throughout the year, a cheerful, glad little song, something like that of the Wren, only without the concluding trill. Although often enough seen in the open, on the ground, the garden paths, and the walks in the shrubbery, he is fond of retirement; and it is surprising how quickly he hops into the nearest cover when alarmed, and threads his way up the hedge, skipping from twig to twig, rarely taking wing though chased repeatedly to and fro. One of the greatest charms attached to the Hedge Accentor is its beautiful nest. The bird is a cunning worker in mosses and twigs, in hairs and feathers, and its pretty little home is one of the first that the gardens and shrubberies yield in spring. The favourite situation for the nest is in the garden hedge, or in a heap of hedge-clippings thrown into the odd corner behind the potting-house. It may also be met with amongst the brambles and briars, or in a low thick holly-bush in the shrubbery. Greenest moss and twigs,

Widely
distributed.

rootlets and dry grass, form the outer structure, which is thickly lined with hair, wool, and feathers. In this the hen lays her five or six eggs, of a beautiful and spotless turquoise-blue. Several broods are reared in the year. Small worms, insects, and larvæ, and tiny seeds, are the Hedge Accentor's customary food; but in winter when these are scarce or hard to find, the bird comes to our windows to partake of crumbs, and then frequents manure-heaps, the farmyard, or the poultry-run, to pick up anything it can find to its taste.

Widely
distributed.

A close companion of the Hedge Accentor is the ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*). Every one knows this trim and sprightly bird of our rambles, whose gay and lively presence, whose charming song and winning ways, never lose their attractiveness, no matter however often they may come before our notice. Of all the birds that gladden our country with their song, none sing more sweetly, more homely, or more plaintively than the Robin. "Home, sweet Home" is in every note of his music. With the exception of the month's moulting season, during the last half of July and the first half of August, the music of this bird may be heard, exceptionally sweet and beautiful in the autumn days and in the first dawn of spring. Early and late he warbles, with no fear of man or resentment of his scrutiny, stimulated to the utmost of his powers by all rival Robins within hearing, and which rarely fail to answer each burst of song. His call-notes are remarkably loud and clear, given forth at our elbow with all the assurance of welcome, and accompanied by a flicking of the tail and bobbing of the head. The

Robin pairs early in March, and during this period is remarkably pugnacious, rival males often fighting with such fury as to kill each other. The nest is built in a great variety of places, even in such unlikely spots as an old water-can, a derelict kettle or saucepan, a drain-pipe or flower-pot. The usual site is either in an old wall, or on a bank, amongst tree-roots, and especially amongst ivy growing over a low wall. The nest is made of moss, dry grass, and great quantities of withered leaves; the lining is of hair and rootlets. The eggs vary from four to as many as eight, white in ground colour, freckled and spotted with pale reddish brown and gray. A common variety has a ring or zone of spots round the larger end; and sometimes eggs with no spots at all may be found. The Robin sits closely, and I have known instances where she has allowed me to gently stroke her without any show of fear. Young Robins—very different in colour from their parents, mottled and spotted buff and black—as soon as they can fly are abandoned by the old birds, which often rear two or three more broods before the summer is over. Insects and worms are the Robin's chief food, but, as every one knows, it is ready to pick up any scraps that may be scattered for the birds, especially during winter. The rich orange-chestnut breast of the Robin is ever a ready mark of identification.

In many gardens, especially those surrounded by old walls, and amongst the hollow trees in the park, we may often come across the REDSTART (*Ruticilla phœnicura*), a species easily identified by its conspicuous chestnut tail: the black throat, white forehead, gray upper parts, and chestnut

Principally
English
type.

lower parts of the male bird are very noteworthy. The Redstart is a summer migrant to our islands, very generally dispersed, arriving about the middle of April and leaving us again in September. He is very fond of sitting on and flitting about the garden walls and the old trees, incessantly flicking his tail when perched; and in these places he catches much of his insect food. His short and rather monotonous song is at its best in the early days of his stay with us. The nesting season is in May. The nest is always placed in a hole of some kind, either in a wall or a tree; and the observer will note with pleasure that a certain spot is often returned to year after year. The nest is somewhat loosely put together, and made of moss, dry grass, hair, wool, and feathers. The eggs, five or six in number, are about the size of the Hedge Accentor's, and like them pure and spotless blue, but not quite so dark in colour.

Widely
distributed.

Still keeping to the park and the garden, we shall meet with another little bird from far across the sea, the SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa grisola*). This bird is readily distinguished by his monotonous and oft-repeated notes of *chee-tic*, *chee-tic*; *tic*, *tic*, *tic*, as he sits quietly on some bare bough or paling, and ever and anon rising into the air in fluttering chase of passing insects. His brown dress, palest on the breast, which is streaked, is very unassuming; but he will insist on sitting on the most exposed places in his haunt, rendering it almost impossible to pass him by unnoticed. He is specially fond of sitting on the drooping branches of the trees in the park, the boughs where the cattle have browsed off the leaves, as also on the park fence and the iron

railings round haystacks. In the garden he may be seen amongst the fruit-trees, or about the greenhouses, using them as his watch-tower from which he sallies in quest of food. When once back in his accustomed haunts, he wanders little all the summer through; but sometimes you may meet with him on the dung-heaps, or even on the open grass lands near the shrubberies. His food is insects, mostly caught in the air, but beetles are often sought on the ground. He has a short and simple little song, which is only uttered at rare and uncertain intervals; he seems always too intent on his fly-catching to waste much time in song. The Spotted Flycatcher builds a charming little nest in June, placing it on some flat branch of a wall-trained fruit-tree, or among the trellis-work above the garden portico, where the climbing roses flourish. In the park it chooses a crevice in the bark, especially among the wych elm trees. Coarse, dry grass and moss, and sometimes an assortment of worsted, twine, and cotton, intermingled with the hard wing-cases of insects, form the outer structure, which is snugly lined with fine roots and horsehair. In this the female lays five or six eggs, pale bluish green in ground colour, mottled and spotted with reddish brown. The young birds—prettily spotted little creatures—keep in company with their parents, who feed and tend them almost all the remainder of the summer. It should here be remarked that the Spotted Flycatcher is one of the very latest of our migrants, not arriving before the middle of May, and like most of these late birds, it leaves early, departing for a southern haunt by the beginning of September.

Principally
English
type.

Ditto but
local in
Wales.

Principally
English and
eastern.

Three species of Warbler are regular summer visitors to the gardens and shrubberies. Best known of these is the BLACKCAP (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and the earliest to arrive in spring, reaching his old haunts about the middle of April. The GARDEN WARBLER (*S. hortensis*) arrives a little later, and loves to frequent the currant and gooseberry bushes in the garden amongst which it often makes its nest; and about the same time the third of these species, the LESSER WHITE-THROAT (*S. curruca*) puts in an appearance. Both this bird and the Blackcap are fond of frequenting the tangled underwood in the shrubbery, especially the briars and brambles that arch over the stream and festoon the laurels and holly-trees; yet both may be observed often enough within the garden, more commonly when the fruit is ripe. Of these three birds the Blackcap, identified by his black head, is far away the sweetest singer; indeed his melody is almost as rich and beautiful as that of the Nightingale. The Lesser Whitethroat, the smallest of the three, with a gray back, brown wings and tail, and nearly white underparts, is the poorest musician, his song being so short as to become even monotonous. On the other hand, the Garden Warbler, in his olive-brown upper plumage, and nearly white under plumage, has a song which, if not so loud and so varied as the Blackcap's, is every bit as soft in tone. All three are in fullest song in early summer. All these little Warblers are shy and restless birds, incessantly hopping about the cool, shady undergrowth, and ever and anon fluttering into the air to catch passing insects. The call-note of each is a more or less harsh *teck*,

sometimes varied with a harsher scolding cry. They feed on insects and fruit. Sometimes they visit the higher branches, especially of those trees dense of foliage, but at the least alarm they endeavour to gain the lower cover. All three species build slight net-like nests among the lower vegetation, of round grass-stalks, rootlets, and sometimes lined with hairs. The eggs of the Blackcap are four or five in number, dull white in ground colour, speckled and spotted with olive-brown and gray, and sometimes streaked with dark brown. Those of the Garden Warbler, four or five in number, are very similar, but the spots are usually darker and more distinct; whilst those of the Lesser Whitethroat are also the same in number and resemble those of the latter most closely, but are much smaller.

We must not overlook the WREN (*Troglodytes parvulus*), as we are observing these birds of the undergrowth. This little nut-brown bird, with tail ever carried as erect and impudent as a fox-terrier's, and never lowered except in death, is almost as well known as the Robin. It is one of the most restless of birds, never still, incessantly on the move, up and down the hedges, and in and out of the brambles and briars, more like a mouse than anything feathered. His bright and cheery song may be heard all through the year, except in the moulting season in August and September. The Wren begins to make its spherical nest towards the end of April, placing it under the overhanging bank of the stream, amongst ivy, in the side of the haystack standing in a corner of the park, amongst the evergreens, or the briars and brambles, and sometimes in a

Widely
distributed.

gooseberry or currant bush in the garden. Dry leaves, grass, or moss form the outer portion, which is then lined with moss, and lastly with a plentiful array of feathers. Here the female lays her half-dozen eggs, pure white, spotted with light red. Insects and their larvæ, especially ants' eggs, and fruit are the Wren's chief food, yet in winter-time it will visit the scattered crumbs below the window.

Amongst the trees in the park, and sometimes on those in the garden and the shrubbery, we may frequently observe the NUTHATCH (*Sitta cæsia*), and still more frequently hear his loud, cheery note of *whit*, especially during spring and summer. The Nuthatch is a southern species, and becomes more and more local northwards of the Midlands. It is a resident with us, though in autumn and winter it becomes a wanderer, and roams the entire country-side in company with Titmice and Creepers. The bright slate-gray of the upper plumage, and the rich buff of the lower, make this little bird easy of identification. In many of its actions it puts you in mind of the Creeper, running up and down the rough bark, or hopping about the smaller branches like the Titmice, head or tail uppermost, it is all the same. Its food is largely composed of insects and larvæ found among the timber, but in autumn nuts and berries are sought after. The repeated hammering of the hard shells is one of the characteristic sounds heard where Nuthatches are about. This bird pairs for life, and returns every season to the old familiar nesting-place. It is rather an early breeder, beginning operations towards the end of April. The nest is placed in a hole in a stump or

Chiefly in
South and
Central
England.

a tree, and less frequently in a wall; and should the entrance be too large, it is plastered up with mud. A slight nest of dry grass and dead leaves, or even only a few scraps of bark and powdered wood, are the only bed for the eggs. These are five to eight in number, pure white, spotted with reddish brown and gray. If the first clutch be removed, the hen-bird will lay again, apparently little concerned at the repeated robbery.

From the Nuthatch we pass to the Titmice. Two species at least are commonly met with at all seasons within the precincts of the garden, the park, and the shrubbery. The best known of these is the BLUE TITMOUSE (*Parus cæruleus*), Widely distributed. notable for the delicate azure blue of much of its upper plumage; the other species is the COAL Ditto. TITMOUSE (*P. ater*, var. *britannicus*), distinguished by his jet black head and white nape and cheeks. Both birds are about the same size, and both may be met with in similar localities. Each is famous for its restless activity, for the endless variety of attitudes assumed during its constant search for food among the branches. Trees and shrubs alike are visited; every little nook and corner comes under their prying scrutiny. Insects and larvæ are the food of these Titmice in summer; in winter this fare is largely supplemented by seeds, notably of the birch and fir. Neither of these birds possesses a song, yet the Coal Tit in springtime oft strings its few harsh notes together into what one might call a love trill. The usual call-note of the Blue Titmouse is a more or less harshly expressed *chicka-chic-ka*, *kee-kee-kee*, whilst the most characteristic cry of the Coal Titmouse is a clear *if-hee-if hee-if-hee*. Holes in trees and walls

are the nesting-places of both these Titmice. Each makes a warm and slovenly nest of moss, dry grass, and feathers ; and the eggs, varying from five to seven in the Coal Titmouse, and from five to twelve in the Blue Titmouse, are white, spotted with reddish brown, the markings on those of the latter being on an average smaller and finer.

Within the seclusion of the garden and the shrubbery, or amongst the wooded cover of the park, no less than half-a-dozen different kinds of Finches have their home and breeding-place. Some of these may be met with elsewhere, as we shall see in our other rambles, and some others change their ground with a changing season, yet all are sure to be seen during the course of our observations in these particular places. Best known of them all, of course, is the House Sparrow. The gardener, to his sorrow, knows this pert and merry bird too well, especially in seed-time, when it is too attentive to the beds ; it also commits some havoc amongst the flowers, particularly the crocuses. With its habits here we have little to do, having already given an account of its life history in our previous ramble. Almost as well known as the Sparrow is the GREENFINCH (*Fringilla chloris*), his showy dress of yellowish green, and the bright yellow in his wings and tail, being too well known to warrant more detailed description. The Greenfinch is a bird of the shrubberies in summer ; he loves to rear his young amidst the dense foliage of the yews, the laurels, and the hollies ; yet at other seasons he affects other haunts, as we shall see when we meet him amongst them. His harsh, long-drawn call-note of *pee-zh* is a very familiar

Widely
distributed.

sound in the shrubberies during early summer; and his simple twittering song is heard incessantly during the whole time of his residence there. The Greenfinch breeds late, commencing its rustic cradle in May, and rears brood after brood all the summer through. You may find its nest not only amongst the evergreens—the yew by preference—but in the whitethorn hedge round the garden, and even in the isolated bushes on the lawn and in the park. The nest is made externally of dry grass, moss, and perhaps wool, with a few twigs interwoven round the outside; and this is most warmly lined with feathers, hair, and wool. The eggs are five or six in number, pure white, spotted and blotched with purplish red and gray. The note of the female at the nesting-place is a musical *pl-wee-et*. As soon as the grasses in the hay meadows are in seed, flocks of Greenfinches gather there, and there most of their time is spent until the grain begins to ripen. At all seasons, however, the Greenfinch is fond of roosting among the evergreens in the shrubbery.

Still keeping to the shrubbery, we shall meet with the BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula vulgaris*), one of the prettiest of our native birds, easily recognised by his black head, wings, and tail, gray back, red underparts, and white rump. It also retires by preference to the evergreens to rear its young, although often enough met with elsewhere in the winter months. Fitful are the glimpses that we catch of the Bullfinch during the breeding season; but in early spring it is much more conspicuous, when it visits the fruit-trees, to pull the buds to pieces and vex the soul of the gardener. The song is heard in spring—a low, piping strain,

Widely
distributed.

uttered as if the bird was fearful of being discovered, and stopped at the least alarm; the piping call, sounding like *din* or *d'u*, is much more familiar. Paired for life, this handsome bird, towards the end of April, begins the duties of the year. The nest is usually amongst the yew or whitethorn bushes, sometimes in the tangled thicket by the stream. Grass, rootlets, and moss, interwoven with twigs, form the outer portion, which is lined with finer roots, wool, and feathers. The eggs, four or five in number, are bluish green in ground colour, spotted, usually in a zone round the larger end, with purplish red and pale pinkish brown. The food of the Bullfinch in summer is mostly insects and larvæ; at other seasons farinaceous buds, hips, haws, and other berries, and the seeds of weeds are its chief support.

English
type. Very
rare in
Ireland.

The handsome HAWFINCH (*Coccothraustes vulgaris*), largest of the truly British Finches, claims our notice next. Of all shy birds the Hawfinch is the shyest, keeping close to the dense and friendly foliage of the evergreens or the fruit-trees in the garden. Sometimes he visits the park, and may be noticed flying from one tree to another; but certainly all the summer through it is the exception to meet with him out of the cover of his favourite haunts. The food of the Hawfinch in spring and early summer is insects and larvæ, and on these its young are reared chiefly. Later on it visits the garden for peas, cherries, and other fruit; nuts, berries, and seeds are its staple fare during the remainder of the year. The nest is often made in a fork of the apple or pear trees, in ivy growing up the trunks of larger trees, and sometimes on a flat branch near the

trunk of a beech or an oak. A yew or holly, or even a whitethorn, is occasionally selected. It is built of fine twigs, stalks of weeds, roots, and moss, and lined with dry grass, finer roots, and hair. The five or six eggs are pale olive-green or brownish buff in ground colour, streaked and spotted with dark greenish brown and pale gray. All through the nesting period both parents keep remarkably quiet, and are most careful not to betray the whereabouts of their home. The young birds keep company with their parents long after they are able to fly. Later on these parties of Hawfinches become larger as brood joins brood, and then the beech woods are often visited for the mast. The Hawfinch is little of a songster, merely uttering a few twittering notes, and its usual call-note is something like that of the Greenfinch, only harsher.

In amongst the fruit-trees in the garden the gentle, pretty GOLDFINCH (*Fringilla carduelis*) rears its young. Like several other of the dwellers here, it only retires to the orchards, the gardens, and the shrubberies during spring and summer; the remainder of the year it affects other haunts. The scarlet face, black crown and hood, black and yellow wings, and more or less brown body plumage easily distinguish this bird from all its congeners. Of all the nests to be found within the compass of this ramble, few exceed in beauty the tiny cradle of the Goldfinch. It is usually placed in a fork of the lichen-covered branches of the fruit-trees, less frequently in the whitethorn hedge or in the shrubbery, and is made outwardly of grass roots and moss, spiders' webs and lichens, and then lined with hair, feathers,

Widely but
locally
distributed.

and vegetable down. The four or five eggs are bluish white, speckled and spotted with reddish brown and gray; they are smaller than those of the Greenfinch, and the markings are finer. In spring the sweet song of the Goldfinch is heard repeatedly; and the bird's singularly plaintive call-note sounds more frequently still from the trees and thickets. This latter may aptly be expressed as *ee-gleet* or *twee-eet*. Insects and larvæ are the Goldfinch's principal food in summer; various seeds, especially of the dock and the thistle, during the remainder of the year.

Widely
distributed.

One other Finch is found in the shrubberies and the park, but only during the winter months, and this is the BRAMBLING (*F. montifringilla*). Like the Redwing and the Fieldfare, this pretty bird is from the Scandinavian woods, arriving on our shores early in November, returning north again with the beginning of spring. The prevailing colours of its plumage are black above and orange-buff below, but in autumn much of the black is concealed by buff margins to the feathers. Bramblings, during the whole period of their stay with us, are gregarious and social, flocking freely with Chaffinches and other hard-billed birds. They are very fond of sitting on the tree-tops in the shrubbery, especially towards sunset, all twittering loudly together. Nightly they seek the shelter of the evergreens with the Redwings, and all the winter through they often remain attached to one particular place. Beech mast, grain, seeds, and insects are the Brambling's staple food. I do not find that separation into exclusive flocks of the sexes during winter in this species as may often be remarked in the Chaffinch.

Another of our most local birds, the WOOD LARK (*Alauda arborea*), may be met with in those parks suited to its requirements. These must be well wooded, and if the ground in places is broken and heathy, studded with low bushes and clothed with fern and brambles, so much the better for the bird. Even in the air it may readily be distinguished from the Skylark by its short tail and more rounded wing. Many of its habits recall the Tree Pipit. It has the same persistent custom of remaining in one particular haunt all the summer through; and it also has some favourite perch, usually a dead limb at the top of one of the trees, where it sits, and from which it starts on those flights which accompany its charming song. He may often be heard singing as he sits, so that motion of the wings is not absolutely essential to music. The song flights are not so high as the Skylark's, and taken in wider circles, but the song itself is sweeter, more continuous, more Warbler-like. Except in the very depths of winter, and during the moulting season, the Wood Lark may be said to be in voice. Early and late it warbles, rising as it were to meet the dawn, and lingering in the air to enjoy the very latest rays of the expiring day. In many of its habits the Wood Lark resembles the Skylark. It is a thorough ground bird, seeking its food among the herbage, sleeping on the ground, and in autumn becoming gregarious. Its food is composed of insects and their larvæ, and small seeds. The Wood Lark pairs early, and its nest, built upon the ground under the shelter of a bush, or amongst long

English type
and local.

grass, or even on the short turf in the open park, is made of dry grass and moss, and lined with finer grass and hair. The eggs are four or five in number, buffish or greenish white in ground colour, spotted with reddish brown and gray. The spots on the eggs of this species are more distinct, and the ground colour more apparent than in those of the Skylark.

English,
south and
east. Rarer
in Scotland.

Our parks and gardens in summer are also the haunt of another very interesting and curious bird, the WRYNECK (*Lynx torquilla*). It arrives here from its winter quarters in Africa about the middle of April, and then its loud, shrill, far-sounding note of *heel-heel* is quite sufficient to identify the species without closer scrutiny. The mottled-brown and gray of this bird's upper plumage are very beautiful, and the pale buff throat and breast, crossed with dark bars, are very characteristic. It is most closely allied to the Woodpeckers; its feet are the same, two toes in front, two behind, and the tongue is extensile like theirs, whilst its habits too are very similar. You may watch it climbing about the old moss-grown trees in the park, searching the chinks and crannies of limbs and trunk for its insect food, then flying in undulating course to another tree, where the same close search is made. In climbing, however, the bird never uses its tail for support. The Wryneck is also often flushed from the ground, where it searches the ant-hills for eggs and ants, picking them up with lightning speed, as they cling to its long sticky tongue, shot in and out too rapidly for the eye to follow it. The Wryneck pairs for life, and season after season.

returns to its old nesting-place. Its breeding season is in May, and the eggs are laid on the powdered wood at the bottom of a hole in a tree or dead stump, perhaps a foot or more from the entrance. These are from five to eight in number, pure and spotless white, and polished like those of the Woodpeckers. The female will go on laying egg after egg if they be judiciously removed. Only one brood, however, is reared, and young and old take their departure south in September. This bird often feigns death, and contorts itself when held in the hand, especially upon being taken from its nest.

There are several birds also met with in the park and the shrubbery which will be noted in greater detail elsewhere. First of these is the STARLING. Flocks of these birds feed on the park lands ; and in autumn oft congregate on the tree-tops there, a noisy, restless throng, to roost in the dense crowns of the sycamores and the horse-chestnuts. Then the CREEPER may be noted on the tree-trunks in the park, and the CUCKOO may also frequently be met with there, and his glad cry sounds repeatedly from the trees, which are also frequented by the GREEN WOODPECKER especially, which comes from the adjoining woods ; and very pretty he looks in his dress of green and yellow as he flies in drooping course across the open spaces from one trunk to another. The RING DOVES are also fond of the trees in the park, and love to roost among the fir-trees in the shrubberies ; whilst the SPARROW HAWK visits these places to prey upon the little birds that tenant them ; and the KESTREL may oft be watched soaring in graceful flight

across the broad expanse of park land, when on his way to the open fields or the woods where he rears his young. The habits of birds in the shrubberies during winter are specially attractive at close of day, vast numbers crowding to the evergreens for warmth, and to roost in safety among the shrubs and bushes.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Rook. . . .	Resident	Harsh <i>caw</i>	Purplish black, bare gray face
Blackbird . .	Resident	Loud <i>pink</i> or chatter	Black
Song Thrush .	Partial migrant	Long - drawn cry or harsh chatter	Olive - brown above, buffish white below
Missel-thrush .	Resident	Harsh chatter; more so than preceding	Olive - brown above, white below
Redwing . . .	October to March and April	Shrill <i>yelp</i> and low chatter	Olive - brown underparts buff and chestnut, white eye-stripe
Fieldfare . .	November to March and April	Harsh <i>sak</i> or <i>tsak</i>	Gray and brown above, white below
Hedge Accentor	Resident	Plaintive <i>peep</i>	Dark brown above, grayish brown below
Robin	Resident	Quickly repeated <i>tit</i> or <i>tat</i>	Olive - brown above, from chin to breast orange chestnut
Redstart. . .	April to September	Plaintive <i>weet</i> or sharp <i>wee-tit-tit</i>	Slate-gray above, rich chestnut below
Spotted Fly-catcher . .	May to September	Sharply uttered <i>chee-tic, tic-tic-tic</i>	Brown above, grayish white below
Blackcap . . .	April to September	Harsh <i>teck</i>	Head black. Above grayish brown, below gray
Garden Warbler	May to September	Harsh <i>teck</i>	Olive - brown above, grayish brown below
Lesser White-throat. . . .	April to September	Harsh <i>teck</i>	Gray and brown above, white below
Wren	Resident	Loud and quickly repeated <i>tit-it-it</i>	Dark brown above, paler brown below
Nuthatch . . .	Resident	Sharp but musical <i>whit</i>	Above slate-gray, chestnut and buff below
Blue Titmouse.	Resident	Harsh - sounding <i>chicka-chicka, kee-e-e-e-r</i>	Crown azure blue, back green, wings and tail blue, underparts yellow

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Coal Titmouse.	Resident	Clear-sounding <i>if-hee, if-hee</i> , oft repeated	Head black, nape white, upper parts brown, underparts grayish white
Greenfinch . .	Resident	Long-drawn <i>peezh</i>	Yellowish green, wings gray and brown
Bullfinch . .	Resident	Clear piping <i>diu</i>	Head black, rump white, back gray, underparts red
Hawfinch . .	Resident	Long-drawn <i>peezh</i>	Brown above, wings and tail black and white, underparts yellowish brown
Goldfinch . .	Resident	Oft-repeated <i>twit</i>	Brown, wings black and yellow, tail black and white
Brambling . .	November to February	Shrill twitter or clear <i>peezh</i>	Black above, throat and breast chestnut, white on wings and tail
Wood Lark. .	Resident	Musical double note	Above brown, light eyestripe conspicuous, underparts buffish white, tail short
Wryneck . .	March and April to September	Shrill <i>heel-heel</i>	Above grayish brown mottled with brownish gray, underparts buff, barred with brown

RAMBLE III.

ALONG THE LANES AND HEDGEROWS.

WE will devote our next chapter to a ramble down the shady lanes and along the sides of the hedgerows. These places in spring and summer are resorted to by various interesting birds for the purpose of nesting ; in autumn and winter they are the haunt of many others that frequent them for the rich supply of fruits and berries, as well as for their privacy ; whilst in winter especially they are the chosen resting-place of many more in their wanderings about the fields. Some of these dwellers in the lanes and hedgerows are birds of shy and retiring habits, more often heard than seen ; yet others are incessantly perching on the topmost twigs, attracting attention either by their showy plumage, or their loud, persistent song, or even by both.

A bird whose conspicuous plumage is certain to be noticed by every observer wandering round many of our southern hedgerows, or along the lanes where trees abound, is the RED-BACKED SHRIKE (*Lanius collurio*). There is no over-looking this handsome bird, for it seems to be possessed with the one determination to make itself as conspicuous as possible, either by perching

on the topmost twigs of the hedges and the dead branches of trees, or even by sitting on gate-posts and telegraph wires. Only last summer (1890), I had a pair of these birds under my special observation for weeks. They had their nest in a beautiful Devonshire lane, adjoining the Great Western Railway; and every day both male and female—the former especially—persisted in sitting on the telegraph wires, some fifty yards from their nest, even the noise of passing trains failing to frighten them from their bare and elevated perch. The Red-backed Shrike must be included among the last batch of migrants, arriving in this country at the beginning of May. It will be remarked that the bird is much attached to its haunts, and places frequented one year will usually be visited again the next. The habits of this pretty bird are very like those of the Flycatchers. It loves to sit on some open, elevated perch and to wait for the winged creatures to pass by on which it feeds, darting out after them in fluttering chase, then returning to its perch again. It differs, however, from those birds in one very important particular, and that is its habit of spitting or impaling many of its captures on long sharp thorns among the bushes. Each bird has its own particular larder, where it often retires to eat its meal, or to store provender for future wants. Beetles, bees, grasshoppers, field mice, small lizards, young birds, and even the adults of such species as Tits, Whinchats, and Buntings, form the food of the Red-backed Shrike. Small birds and mice are often wedged in between a forked twig, which holds them firmly whilst they are torn to pieces by the hungry Shrike's powerful notched bill. The alarm

note of this bird is very characteristic, a loud shrill *churr-churr-chack*; and whilst uttering this note, or sitting silently on its perch, the bird is repeatedly moving its tail, not up and down so much, as most birds do, but from side to side, half expanding it the while. I have only noticed this habit in the Red-backed Shrike. The song of this species consists of a few short rambling notes, more remarkable for their peculiarity than their sweetness. In addition to these characteristics the bird may be readily identified by its slate-gray head and neck, black line through the eye, rich brown back, black wings, black and white tail, and rosy-tinted breast. The female is not so showy, being reddish brown above, including the tail, and the underparts have no roseate hue, and are more or less barred with brown. A fortnight or three weeks after its arrival the Red-backed Shrike begins nesting; and what is very noteworthy, the nest is often built near a much-frequented path, and in an exposed situation, where it as likely as not remains overlooked until long after the young have flown. This nest is rather large, and made of the stalks of plants, often with flowers attached, dry grass, roots, and moss, and lined with finer roots, wool, and horse-hair. The eggs, from four to six in number, vary through almost every shade of green, buff, and pink, spotted and blotched (usually in a zone round the larger end) with brownish red and gray. Red-backed Shrikes leave this country early in autumn—in September—the old birds apparently leaving us in pairs just as they arrived in spring, a circumstance which goes far to prove that they pair for life.

Few are the hedgerow-sides that we can stroll along in spring and summer, few the green shady lanes down which we can ramble during this delightful period, without meeting with the WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia cinerea*). This is another bird more often heard than seen, and its harsh scolding notes, uttered as it threads its way through the luxuriant vegetation, or the trembling of the twigs here and there as it hops along the hedge, betray its hidden whereabouts. You may recognise this bird by his reddish brown back, rufous margins to the quills and wing-coverts, and pale whitish underparts. Perhaps the Whitethroat is most *en évidence* just after its arrival about the middle of April, for then the male especially delights to play about the more exposed twigs, and repeatedly sits on a tall, bending spray to warble his garrulous song. Sometimes he is so full of joy that he flutters up into the air, or along the top of the hedge, singing gladsomely all the time. This habit is especially marked early in June, when the Whitethroat is in fullest song. In its habits it is a restless little creature, ever hopping about from twig to twig in constant search for the insects and larvæ on which it feeds. Like most of the Warblers the present species is partial to fruit, not only eating the wild raspberries and strawberries growing along the banks in the lanes and by the hedges, but visiting the gardens near its haunts. The Whitethroat breeds late, when the verdure of the hedges is in greatest luxuriance. The nest is made among the tangled briars and brambles that interlace the hedges, or grow in dense masses here and there along the lanes.

Widely distributed.

Sometimes you may find it in a low bush amongst nettles or tall grass, and especially in a gorse. This nest is of the flimsiest net-like construction, made of dry, round grass stalks, and lined with roots and horsehair. It is deep, and beautifully round, and generally contains five eggs. These are greenish white in ground colour, marbled and spotted with greenish brown and gray, and sometimes a few darker hair-like streaks. Most of the spots often form a zone round the larger end of the egg. Only one brood is reared, and for the remainder of their stay the birds lead a solitary life.

Widely yet
locally
distributed.

One other little Warbler may be found in the hedges and lanes, between the months of April and September, and this is the GRASSHOPPER WARBLER (*Locustella locustella*), easily identified (when you are fortunate enough to see him) by his olive-brown upper plumage, spotted with darker brown, and his pale buff under plumage, nearly white on the throat and centre of the belly. Of all the birds of the underwood it is the shyest, the most skulking. I have a vivid remembrance of my first acquaintance with this species when a boy, five-and-twenty years ago. The never-to-be forgotten trilling note attracted my attention as I walked along an old lane which was used as a cart-track to the fields and a foot-path between Heeley and Norton—a village famous for being the birthplace of Chantrey. For an hour or more I chased the little brown singer up and down the cover, through and through the dense masses and thickets of gorse and rose-briars, amongst the long grass in the hedge bottom, and under the briars; and yet I don't

think I saw him half-a-dozen times in all my scrambling search. The long-drawn sibilant note charmed me, rooted me to the spot, and made me more and more determined to find out and get a good view of the hidden singer. I can only describe this curious trill as being like the note of the grasshopper, only louder. For two or three minutes together it sounded as I stood listening, silent and astonished; then the moment I moved and tried to get a peep, the queer music ceased, to begin again in another part of the cover; and this continued long after the gloom of the summer evening had fallen and rendered all chance of closer scrutiny impossible. Facilities for identifying the birds of my rambles were few in those days, and I am bound to confess that it was months afterwards before I learned the name of the bird that had baffled me. To this day the lane is the haunt of the Grasshopper Warbler. The food of this bird is very similar to that of the Whitethroat. The nest is made in May, and is artfully concealed among the grass and weeds growing under the brambles and briars, and in the bottom of the hedges, almost entirely hidden by some overhanging mass of verdure. It is made of dry grass, moss, withered leaves, and lined with finer grasses and roots. The five or six eggs are pinkish white, profusely spotted and dusted with reddish brown and gray. Rarely is the female seen to fly from her home, but when alarmed she flits through the undergrowth more like a mouse than a bird, silently and stealthily, leaving you to discover her well-hidden nest—if you can.

One of the most notable birds of the lanes and

Widely
distributed.

the hedgerows is the YELLOW BUNTING (*Emberiza citrinella*), and one of the prettiest, too. You may easily identify him by his canary-coloured head, rich brown upper and yellow under plumage. No skulking bird is he. All day long he may be observed on the topmost twigs, singing his monotonous song, or uttering his oft-repeated and even more monotonous call-note—a long-drawn *churrze*, which in spring becomes *chee-chee-churrze*. His song consists of a single note repeated in various tones several times, finishing with two others, the last continued much longer than the rest. The Yellow Bunting is one of the most persistent singers of the hedges, bird after bird catching up the song, and answering in the same repeated strain. He may also very often be met with on the trees of the hedgerows, especially in winter, and at that season flocks of this pretty bird often settle on the hedges. He feeds largely on insects and larvæ in summer, especially caterpillars; but during the remainder of the year grain and seeds, in great variety, are his staple support. The Yellow Bunting begins to breed in April, and nests may be found from this month onwards to August, so that several broods are reared in the year. The weed-grown bank of the hedgerow or the lane is this bird's favourite nesting-place, and here, often well under the shelter of a tuft of herbage or a bush, it makes its home of dry grass, perhaps a little moss, and lined with roots and horsehair. The four or five eggs are grayish or purplish white, streaked and pencilled, blotched and spotted with dark brown, the finer streaks often joining the round spots and blotches into an intricate tracery.

Among the lanes and hedgerows of the South of England, especially in the more westerly counties, the CIRL BUNTING (*E. cirrus*) may be met with. It is closely allied to the Yellow Bunting, but wants the bright yellow head, the throat is dark blackish brown, below which is a yellow spot, below which again is an olive band across the breast which shades into chestnut, the remainder of the underparts yellow. The Cirl Bunting is more of a tree bird than its commoner ally, and especially affects hedges and lanes in which this larger type of vegetation is common. It is also of more skulking habits, yet is just as persistent a singer. The song resembles that of the Yellow Bunting, but wants the long-drawn notes which almost invariably accompany the close of that bird's refrain. He sings industriously enough between the months of April and June, less frequently in July, when his music is hushed for the year in the autumnal moult. He feeds on insects, grain, and seeds, according to season, especially on grasshoppers. As the Cirl Bunting prefers the higher vegetation for a perching-place, in like manner it chooses a site among the bushes at some distance from the ground for its nest. A gorse-bush or a thicket of brambles and briars is a favourite place. Sometimes, however, it may be found upon the ground on a bank, or amongst the herbage at the foot of a tree. It is made of similar materials to those employed by the Yellow Bunting—coarse grass, moss, leaves, roots, and hair. The four or five eggs are somewhat similar to those of that bird, but are rounder in form, the ground colour is bluish or greenish white, and the markings are darker and bolder.

From valleys
of Thames,
Avon, and
Severn.
South to
coast.

Widely
distributed.

Another very familiar dweller in the lanes and the hedges is the CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla cœlebs*). It is a bird of bright and conspicuous plumage too, especially during flight, when the white-barred wings and the white on the outer tail feathers are fully displayed. His slate-gray head, chestnut mantle, yellowish green rump, and delicate reddish pink underparts are very marked. Like the Buntings, he is a most persistent singer, especially in early spring. His short, loud, and cheerful song is one of the first signs of the changing year, and sounds particularly grateful to the ear on the bright windy days of March. His monotonous note of *pink* distinguishes him at once from all other birds of the hedgerows. He sings incessantly from March to May, then less frequently on to the middle of July, when his voice is lost in the moult. Sometimes, however, he regains his music in September, but only under very exceptional circumstances. The Chaffinch pairs early in the spring, but nest-building rarely commences before the first or second week in April, much later than that if the season be at all backward. Of all the pretty nests to be found in the hedges but one equals in neatness and in beauty that of the Chaffinch. The more open hedgerows—places where the growth is old, and there are plenty of stumps and stunted bushes, the result of many years' regular trimming with the bill-hook—are the favourite spots. Here a crotch is selected, often the three-pronged fork of an old thorn or hazel, or the mossy stump of a blackthorn or a crab. Day by day for a fortnight you may visit this wondrous home, and watch it slowly grow in

beauty and in finish with each daily scrutiny. You may with pleasure and amazement observe each stage in this beautiful nest, from the first few scraps of moss and lichen, until the deep, warm cradle is complete. The outside is made largely of moss, with a little dry grass and a few fine rootlets intermixed, and the inside is thickly lined with hair, feathers, and vegetable down. The great beauty of the Chaffinch's nest consists in the bits of lichen, cobwebs, and scraps of paper that are garnished all over the outside, the parent birds being careful to select such materials for their purpose as harmonise most closely in colour with the branch on which it rests. The four or five eggs are pale olive or bluish green in ground colour, spotted and occasionally streaked with purplish brown. Many of the spots are round, and darkest in the centre. The parent Chaffinches, especially the female, become exceedingly noisy when their tiny home is approached, and with incessant cries of *pink*, hop from spray to spray, and often betray its whereabouts by their solicitude for its safety. Insects and their larvæ in summer, and seeds of many kinds, including grain, in spring, autumn, and winter, form the food of the Chaffinch.

Two other little birds, both cunning builders of charming nests, make the hedges and lanes their haunts during spring and summer. First of these is the LESSER REDPOLE (*F. rufescens*), and of the two it is decidedly the rarer, especially in southern districts. Through the autumn and winter the Lesser Redpole is gregarious, just like its close ally the Linnet; but at the approach of

North of
Leicester in
summer.
Rarer in
south.

spring the flocks disband, and in pairs the birds seek out the hedges where they intend to make their nests. In general appearance the Redpole resembles the Linnet, but the much smaller size, dark chin-spot, and double wing-bar, may always prevent confusion. Early in spring the sweet little song of the male is heard from time to time all day long—a sweet warbling strain, something like the Linnet's, only nothing near so loud. The expressive and very distinct call-note of the Redpole, as it sits perched upon the hedges and trees, is a long-drawn *on-wee*, and during flight an oft-repeated *twit*. The Redpole is a late breeder, its nest seldom being completed before the end of May. It is a snug little home enough—wedged in a crotch of some mossy stump, or in a fork of the more slender branches, especially among whitethorns—made externally of moss, dry grass, rootlets, perhaps a few fine twigs, and lined with vegetable down and feathers. The eggs are four or five in number, greenish blue in ground colour, spotted with purplish red and gray, and sometimes streaked with dark brown. Save when the young are hatched, the old birds do not evince much anxiety for their nest; but then they often fly round and round, and hop restlessly from spray to spray, all the time uttering their twittering notes. As soon as their young can fly, and the moult is over, the hedges are almost deserted, save as resting-places, and they evince a strong partiality for the open pastures, as we shall see in our ramble over those places.

The second species whose nest warrants special attention for its remarkable beauty is the

LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE (*Acredula rosea*). It is the more interesting when we remember that no other British Titmouse builds half such an elaborate home, or places it in the branches. All through the winter the Long-tailed Tit may be met with in a variety of haunts, roaming up and down the country-side in little parties, usually composed of the broods of the previous summer and their parents; but as spring advances the social impulses are lost, the tiny creatures separate into pairs, and the duties of the year commence. It is a stirring sight to see a party of these feathered mites trooping along the hedges, say in midwinter, when the foliage is scant, and one can see their every movement. One after the other they go, calling merrily all the time—a low and rapidly repeated *si-si-si*, or *see-see-see*, varied by an occasional harsher note—and turning and twisting into the oddest attitudes as they search the twigs and buds for food. No matter how much they are disturbed, the party keeps together; and rarely do they stay in one spot, the whole country-side is their pasture—hedges, woods, trees, orchards, coppices, all are scrutinised in turn. Insects and their larvæ, and seeds, form the food of this species. The Long-tailed Tit begins to nest in spring. The usual site for its nest, when placed in the hedgerows, is a holly-bush, and when in the lanes a tangled thicket of briar and bramble, or a gorse-bush, is usually chosen. This nest is globular, like a Wren's, only composed externally of green moss, silvered and spangled over with lichens, scraps of paper, and spiders' webs, lined with an

Widely
distributed;
but com-
monest in
England.

incredible number of feathers, and perhaps a little hair. No other nest excels in beauty that of the Long-tailed Tit—a wonderful and charming piece of handiwork, when we bear in mind that it is put together by one of the smallest of our native birds, with a bill little over one-eighth of an inch in length, and with a body that could be put inside a thimble! The eggs are from six to ten in number, white in ground colour, faintly speckled with brownish red.

Widely
distributed.

The nest of the MARSH TITMOUSE (*Parus palustris*) may also be found in the lanes and hedges. This bird is readily distinguished from its allies by its rufous brown back, and black nape; and especially by its loud, oft-repeated note of *tay-tay-tay*. Its habits are much the same as those of the other Titmice, only it is more partial to the hedgerows, and searches the lower vegetation much more than the highest trees. Its nest is made in May in a hollow stump in the hedges, and is composed of dry grass, moss, wool, feathers, and hair. The from six to ten eggs are white, spotted with reddish brown, and so closely resemble those of the Blue and Coal Titmice as to be indistinguishable with any degree of certainty. As soon as the young are reared the brood appears to separate, and for the remainder of the year the Marsh Tit is one of the least gregarious of the Titmice, yet often mixes with its congeners in their errant wanderings. The nests of all the other species of Titmice may occasionally be found in the hedges and the lanes, but the two species here given are the most characteristic of these localities.

The birds we have already noticed have been

selected as the most peculiar species of the lanes and the hedgerows, but many other birds will be sure to be met with in them. Thus, there are few hedges round which we can ramble without flushing the noisy BLACKBIRD. With what a startling cry he issues from them! First we hear him hopping along, rustling about the fallen leaves and dry twigs, then a moment after out he comes with noisy voice, and flying low for a few yards pops in again; and time after time will he renew the same tactics, until the end of the hedge is reached, and he either makes a detour across the fields, or enters the wood or the shrubbery—his truer haunt—and we see him no more. Then, too, the SONG THRUSH frequents the hedges, commonly enough; and both it and the Blackbird repeatedly make their nest within them. Our little friend the HEDGE ACCENTOR is also here to greet us with its complaining chirp, and we catch fitful glimpses of it as it flits along the centre of the hedge. The WREN and the RED-START may also be met with, the former especially; and then again the BULLFINCH occasionally makes his nest in a hedgerow. This bird, however, is most frequently seen in these places during winter, and very handsome he looks as he flits in drooping flight before us, followed by his less showy mate, or sits and calls to her in the twilight, just before entering the shrubberies where they roost. In autumn especially the hedgerows are frequented by wandering GOLDCRESTS, and the WILLOW WREN may be seen there, remarkably so during the late summer months.

Many of the lanes are used as cart-roads from

the fields to the farmyards, and during corn harvest they are strewn with much scattered grain which has fallen from the waggons as they jolted along the deep ruts, or has been brushed from the piled-up loads by the branches of the trees overhead or the long hedge-twigs at the side. Here such species as GREENFINCHES, BUNTINGS, and CHAFFINCHES may be seen hopping about picking up the unusual feast. Then again, the hedges round the corn lands always swarm with birds, not necessarily those that breed in them, but birds that have been enticed thither by the abundance of food in the adjoining fields. Here, as we wander along, we may startle vast flocks of SPARROWS and Greenfinches from the wheat and oats, and they all alight in fluttering hosts upon the hedges, ready to fly down again into the corn the moment we are gone. Many farmers take good care to cut their hedges as bare as possible, as well as all the lower branches of the trees, so that they shall not harbour the birds so much; for it is notorious that most of the damage done in the corn-fields by birds is for a few yards round the hedges, in which the little pilferers can hide or take refuge when alarmed. In winter the hedges are least frequented by birds, especially those that are bare and much exposed. It is only as resting-places that most birds use them then, when flying to and from the fields, or as fleeting haunts by day in their search for food; so that these places become the most interesting in spring, and remain so as long as they retain their verdure. The SPARROW HAWK must be alluded to as a frequent passer along the hedges, snatching the

little birds sitting on the sprays, especially in the dusk of evening.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Red - backed Shrike . .	May to September	Harsh <i>churr-chack</i>	Gray and chestnut-brown above, pinkish white below, tail black and white
Whitethroat .	April to October	Harsh <i>teck</i> or <i>trrrr</i> ; alarm-note, <i>wick-a-wick</i>	Brown above, white below
Grasshopper Warbler . .	April to September	Harsh <i>teck</i> ; song likenote of grasshopper	Olive - brown above, each feather with dark centre, pale brown below
Yellow Bunting	Resident	L o n g - d r a w n <i>churrae</i>	Brown above, head and underparts yellow
Cirl Bunting .	Resident	A monotonous <i>sirr</i>	Brown above, head olive - green, throat blackish, olive band across breast
Chaffinch . .	Resident	A monotonous <i>pink</i>	Head slate-gray, back rich brown, wings and tail black and white, underparts reddish pink
Lesser Redpole	Resident	Long-drawn <i>non-wee</i> , oft-repeated <i>twil</i>	Rufous brown above, buffish white below
Long - tailed Titmouse .	Resident	Rapid <i>si-si-si</i>	Head black and white, above black and pink, below rosy gray
Marsh Titmouse	Resident	Harsh <i>tay-tay-tay</i>	Crown to nape black, cheeks white, above sandy brown, below buffish white

RAMBLE IV.

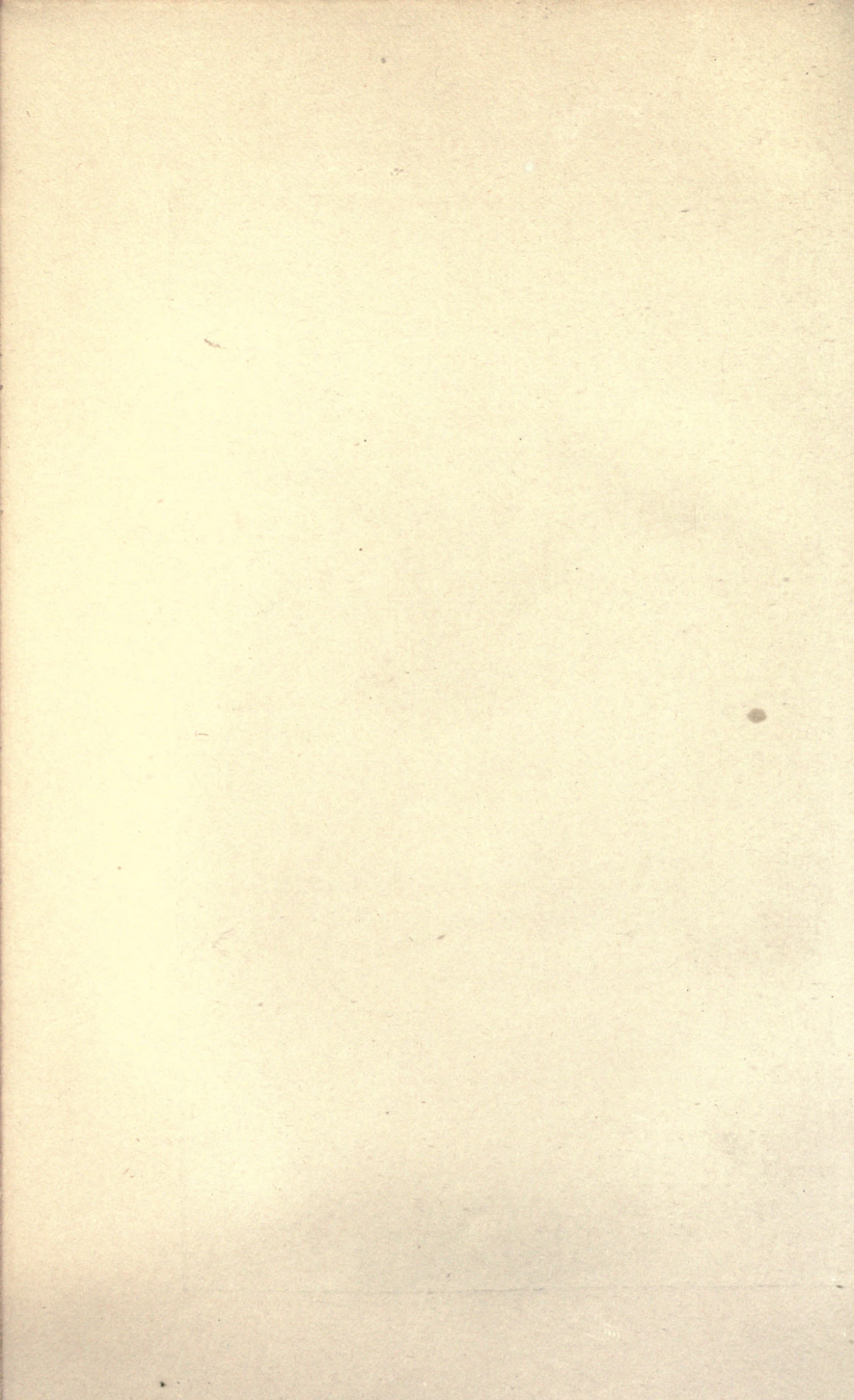
ACROSS THE OPEN FIELDS AND DOWNS.

OUR fourth ramble may be aptly taken across the open fields and downs, the lanes and hedgerows usually adjoining the one and not unfrequently leading to the other. Like all other districts through which we may wander, the fields and the downs are inhabited by certain birds, most of which, if not absolutely peculiar to these places, are their chief characteristic so far as bird life is concerned. At all seasons the Fields are full of interest; in spring and summer they are the breeding-grounds of many birds; in autumn and winter the resort of more. Owing to the great diversity of the crops upon them, food and cover are furnished for birds of widely different habits and organisation. For the sake of making our ramble over them as simple and comprehensible as possible, we will first deal with them in spring and summer, first noticing the birds that habitually resort to them for nesting purposes.

Northern
type; least
common in
south.

So far as the downs are concerned, one of the most characteristic species is the WHEATEAR (*Saxicola ænanthe*)—Tennyson's "blue bird of March." Unlike many of our poets, England's





talented Laureate is a keen observer of Nature too, and rarely sacrifices facts upon the shrine of genius. His allusion to the Wheatear is particularly a happy one, for the little bird with the blue-gray back is one of the earliest of our migrants, and may be seen upon the southern Downs on Lady Day—a visitor of almost as much regularity as the rent-collector himself. The white rump of the Wheatear makes him a very conspicuous object as he flies before us across the breezy wastes. He is very fond of sitting on a boulder or a rough wall, and is remarkably confiding, especially for the first few days after his arrival. At the two periods of migration, notably the autumn one, the Wheatear is gregarious. Flocks of these birds arrive in March, but soon separate into pairs and return to their accustomed haunts; and then again in autumn the broods and their parents congregate from all the countryside, and the gatherings become larger and larger as the flight is slowly taken, until once more the southern Downs swarm with Wheatears restlessly preparing for their journey across the sea. In spring and autumn, especially, the Wheatear may be observed on the fallow fields, following in the wake of the plough, searching the newly turned earth for the worms and insects on which it feeds. For the most part the Wheatear is a terrestrial species, although it can and does perch freely on trees, where such are to be met with in its haunts. A few weeks after its arrival the Wheatear begins breeding. The nest is one of the most difficult to find, being cleverly hidden under a heap of stones, in an old wall, or beneath the shelter of a rock. It is made of dry grass, sometimes with a little

moss intermixed, and lined sparingly with hair. The four or five eggs are pale sky-blue, and spotless. As is usual with most birds that display gregarious instincts, if only periodically, the young are tended for some time after they leave the nest, and their parents become very solicitous for their safety when we approach, flying to and fro in the air overhead, uttering their plaintive notes, or alighting on the ground and walls to watch our movements. The short song of the Wheatear is often given forth as the male flutters in the air, but it becomes less and less frequent as summer advances, although it is sometimes renewed in autumn. The very distinctive call-note of this bird is an oft repeated *chic-chac-chac*. As soon as the autumn moult, in August, is over, the southern migration begins, and there are few Wheatears left in our islands by the end of September.

Widely but
locally
distributed,
especially in
extreme
south-west of
England.

Amongst the gorse coverts on the sides of the open downs, but more especially in the fields which are reserved for hay, we are sure to meet with another little bird somewhat closely allied to the Wheatear, and this is the WHINCHAT (*Pratincola rubetra*). Its habit of clinging to the tall weeds in the mowing grass, its rufous breast, brown upper plumage, and white eyestripe, make identification easy; and the monotonous call-note of *u-tac, u-tac, tac-tac-tac*, an easier matter still. The Whinchat arrives in April, and until the herbage in the fields is sufficiently dense it keeps much to the trees and hedges. But as soon as the tall stems of cow-parsley grow up among the meadow grass, and the docks and other weeds are sufficiently strong to hold the bird, these places are forsaken,

and for the remainder of the year its favourite haunt is among the grass. Here it may be seen flitting from stem to stem, or sitting quietly uttering its call-notes with an occasional beat of its short tail, ever and anon fluttering into the air to catch a passing insect. The male also often warbles his simple low-pitched song whilst in the air. Mayhap you alarm him, and he flies low across the grass to another stem, or even to the fence which encloses the pond. The Whinchat's food consists of insects and their larvæ, and small worms. Many of the insects are caught in the air; indeed, this bird in numbers of its habits resembles the Flycatcher, and always prefers a bare perching-place where a good look-out can be obtained. The drooping branches of trees in the centre of meadows are always an attractive place for this little bird. The Whinchat is a late breeder, and only one brood is reared in the year. By the beginning of May, not until the middle of that month in northern localities, it may be seen in pairs, and a week or so after this event the nest is completed. When in the gorse coverts it is usually in a similar situation to that used by the Stonechat; but here in the meadows it is placed among the herbage, often in the centre of the field. Few nests are harder to find. Years ago I used to employ a method which rarely failed. This was to walk systematically up and down the grass at night when the birds were on their nests; and as they then sit close, I generally found their home at my feet as the flushed bird rose from under them. The nest is made in a little hollow, and is formed of dry grass and moss, and lined with rootlets and hair.

The five or six eggs are turquoise-blue, with a faint zone of light-brown spots round the larger end, sometimes the smaller end. The mowers oft disturb the nest of the Whinchat before the young are fully fledged, and then the birds become more shy, and flit about the swathes, restless and disconsolate at the loss of the friendly cover. The birds keep together a good deal for the rest of the summer, often repairing to the pastures, and here they remain until the moult is over, and the time for their departure comes, which is in September.

Principally
English
type.
Eastern.

Another bird which is even more closely associated with the fields is the TREE PIPIT (*Anthus arboreus*). He arrives in our islands about the third week in April, and may always be identified by his habit of perching on some tree in the fields, invariably on a dead branch near the top, or at the very summit if among the foliage, from which at intervals he soars up on fluttering wings, singing as he goes, and then, when the zenith of his flight is reached, returns gliding on motionless and expanded wings and tail to his starting-place. Again and again he soars out from the tree; all day long he indulges in these song-flights, sometimes visiting another tree from which to soar anew. It would appear that this bird returns yearly to its old haunts, and season after season one particular tree is selected above all others for his perching-place. Sometimes he may be heard to warble on the trees, but his song is never so long or so varied as when he utters it in the air. Although the Tree Pipit is such a bird

of the tree-tops, his nest is always on the ground, generally among the mowing grass, less frequently among the shorter herbage of the pastures, and perhaps most rarely of all among the weeds upon the banks below the hedges. I have repeatedly remarked, as confirmation of the fact of this bird returning to old haunts yearly, that it will continue to use a field for a nesting-place which, owing to rotation of crops, has changed from mowing grass to pasture, or from pasture to corn. The nest is very similar to that of the Whinchat—a slightly-built little structure, made of dry grass and bits of moss, and lined with hair. The four or five eggs vary considerably in colour—dull white, or olive-green, or grayish white in ground colour, variously spotted and blotched with purplish brown or olive-brown, and sometimes with one or two streaks of blackish brown. Eggs of the same clutch are invariably similar, however. The female sits closely; indeed, all the summer through she keeps much to the ground. For some little time after they leave the nest the young are tended by their parents; yet by the time the moulting season is over these parties have mostly dispersed. All the remaining time of their stay the Tree Pipits keep to the pastures and the fields, roosting on the ground, yet when flushed often taking refuge in the nearest trees. The habit of sitting on the tree-tops peculiar to the male also changes, and he affects the ground as much as his mate when his song ceases for the season. The food of the Tree Pipit consists of insects and their larvæ, and small worms. The bird may also

be noticed in the corn-fields eating the soft milky grain. The southern migration of this bird begins in September, and is continued into October.

We will now leave the hay meadows for a little time to glance at the actions and nesting economy of the YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla raii*), a bird of the pastures and the fields that are being tilled for grain and root crops. The bright yellow head and underparts, and the olive-green upper parts, of this pretty bird will readily serve to distinguish it from its congeners; besides, it is *the* Wagtail of the fields, and least frequently seen by the waterside of all. Although it must be classed as a summer visitor to our shores, the impulse or the inclination to migrate in autumn is not so universal in this species, and odd birds may be met with all the winter through. It is also one of the earliest birds to return, making its appearance in the wake of the plough as soon as the weather is sufficiently open for the work of the fields to progress. Although not exactly gregarious, numbers of these birds may be seen together upon the same ploughed land in March. Very neat and pretty they look, as they run along the newly-turned furrows, and up and down over the clods of earth, searching everywhere for food. So tame and confiding, too, tripping round the ploughman's heels, and following him from one end of the field to the other, occasionally taking short undulating flights, rising with a shrill *chiz-zit*, and dropping again a little farther on, beating the tail quickly up and down as they alight. Soon these gatherings become smaller, as the birds distribute themselves over the fields. Their favourite summer haunts are now the pastures;

Principally
English
type.
Eastern.

indeed, the Yellow Wagtail is a close associate with cattle, and may usually be met with running round them, often within a few inches of the mouth of a grazing horse or cow. The flies disturbed by the feeding animals, or attracted by them, are the cause of the Wagtail's presence in such places; besides, the droppings of the cows and horses harbour beetles and other insects in abundance, and these form the birds' chief food. The Yellow Wagtail is only a fitful singer, rising into the air at uncertain intervals, and warbling a short yet sweet refrain. Then perhaps for days he will not be heard again. The nest of this species is placed among the grass at the foot of a tree, or below a wall or a hedge, or on the banks at the sides of the pastures. It is made of dry grass and moss, and lined with finer grass and hair. The four or five eggs are grayish white in ground colour, marbled and blotched with various shades of brown. Yellow Wagtails may be seen upon the fields in flocks during September and October, and then the migration is in progress.

Decidedly the most prominent songster of the fields and downs is the SKYLARK (*Alauda arvensis*). Who does not know this splendid singer of the sky? Who has not lain amongst the long grass of the meadows, or the shorter herbage of the downs, during the warm spring days, to watch the tiny brown bird grow less and less as he climbs on fluttering wing to the clouds; to listen to his rich, glad notes; fainter and fainter, high up there under the wide blue dome of heaven? These aërial song-flights render the Skylark one of the most familiar of birds. In the very earliest days of spring the Skylark

Widely
distributed.

begins his song ; even a mild day in midwinter will oft woo him into voice, and as the year draws on apace his music becomes more frequent, until, in April and May, he is the most persistent singer of the fields. These song-flights, although common to many other birds, are equalled by no other species, both for altitude and persistency of music. No other known bird warbles so high in the atmosphere, or flies to such an elevation for the purpose of song. These flights are by no means perpendicular, and the ascent is usually more devious than the descent ; and when the zenith of the journey is reached the bird often flies hither and thither before coming down. Then, again, the descent is much more rapid than the ascent, the bird usually ceasing to warble when a few yards from the ground, and then dropping like a stone, either into the herbage at once, or to fly a little way above it before finally alighting. But these aërial flights are not by any means imperative to the Skylark's song, for in the vernal year he may be repeatedly heard to warble on the ground, either as he sits on some clod or turf, or as he runs to and fro about the fields. All through the autumn and winter the Skylark is more or less gregarious, frequenting the clover fields and weedy stubbles by preference ; but in spring these companies disband, and separate into pairs for the purpose of breeding. The great nesting-grounds of the Skylark are the hay meadows and the corn lands. The nest is placed amongst the herbage on the open fields and downs, and like most of these nests upon the ground in the pastures, is made of dry grass and moss, and lined with finer grass and hair. The four or five

eggs are grayish white, spotted, clouded, and mottled over the entire surface with greenish brown. The hen-bird sits closely, leaving and returning to her nest by running stealthily through the herbage; and the cock-bird never drops down upon it, always visiting it in a similar way. Two broods are often reared in the year. The Skylark moults in September, and about that time begins to pack upon the stubbles. Its food consists of insects, larvæ, and worms in summer, but for the remainder of the year it is chiefly composed of seeds and grain. Skylarks are rarely seen in the air after the breeding season, skulking close among the herbage of the fields, where they also sleep, and only rising with a mellow double call-note as we almost tread upon them in walking across their haunts. To these they are remarkably attached, and frequent certain stubbles all through the winter, only quitting them during long-continued snow, returning as soon as the weather is milder.

The wanderer across the downs and fields, inland or near the coast, will often observe a brown-looking bird, heavy in movement and stout of form, about the size of the Skylark. This is the COMMON BUNTING (*Emberiza miliaria*). He is the largest of the Buntings, the least showy in colour, and the least musical in song. Very often you may see him sitting on the top of a little bush in the fields, or even on the telegraph wires and walls, and every few moments hear his short, monotonous song, which, if we translate it into English, sounds like *see-see-see-I-I-I'm-he-r-r-re*. He is a most pertinacious singer, too, and from early spring until the autumn remains in voice.

Widely
distributed,
but local.

His song is not unfrequently heard as he flies across the fields from one bush to another. Sometimes he may be noticed clinging to the stem of a weed, a stalk of meadow-sweet, a dock, or a thistle; and as he is by no means shy, you may advance with due caution and observe him closely as he sits uttering his monotonous *zit*. The Common Bunting is a rather late breeder, postponing his domestic arrangements until the young corn is sufficiently dense to furnish plenty of cover. It may be observed in pairs during April, but May is the regular nesting period. The nest is built upon the ground, often in the middle of the field, frequently nearer to the hedges, and occasionally under a bramble or a bush growing on the open downs, or in a neglected corner of the fields which is too out-of-the-way for the plough to reach. It is made of dry grass and straws, and lined with finer grass, roots, and horsehair. The four or five eggs are the largest of the British Buntings', but otherwise resemble them in general appearance. Only one brood is reared. In autumn the Common Bunting becomes gregarious, and at that season its numbers appear to be considerably increased by migrants. During winter it often fraternises with Yellow Buntings, Larks, and Finches. Its food consists of insects and larvæ in summer, and chiefly of seeds and grain for the remainder of the year. This bird may often be met with in the fields of standing corn, and the stubbles afterwards are always a favourite haunt.

Three species of Game Birds may also be met with amongst the herbage of the fields. The best known of these is the PARTRIDGE (*Perdix*

cinerea). The Partridge is too well known to need description here ; the brown birds that rise in startled coveys from the stubbles and the turnips with whirring wing, being familiar to every wanderer across the fields. The Partridge is common enough wherever he is preserved and protected by man, although he flourishes best on dry soils, and in districts where the fields are not too large and the hedges furnish cover. Unlike so many Game Birds, the Partridge is monogamous ; indeed, I am of opinion that this bird pairs for life. Very early in the year the coveys—or rather, what is left of them—begin to separate. In March and April the love-call of the male—a curious laughing cry, something like *kirr-rr-ric*—sounds incessantly from the fields, and a week or so later (in May on an average) the female goes to nest. This scarcely deserves the name, for it is only a hollow lined with a few withered leaves and a little dry grass, frequently arranged in a dry ditch below the hedgerows, in the hedge bottoms, or often enough amongst the meadow grass and the growing corn. Sometimes it is made in the most frequented situations, by the side of a footpath or near a gateway—as if the bird were fully conscious of the protection it received from man. Ten to twenty eggs are laid in this rude nest, uniform olive-brown in colour. The Partridge sits closely enough, often allowing herself to be taken in the hand rather than desert her charge ; and when she voluntarily leaves her nest she is careful to cover her eggs with bits of vegetation to hide them from the prying eyes of enemies. Both birds assist in bringing up the brood, and the young chicks, able

to run as soon as they are hatched, are quickly able to fly, having several sets of quills before they reach maturity. Partridges roost on the ground at all seasons, and the rambler over the fields may often see the spots where they have slept marked by a ring of droppings. The Partridge is very fond of dusting itself and of basking in the warm sunshine on the bare parts of the fields; and in autumn it is especially fond of haunting the turnips and the stubbles. The Partridge feeds largely on grain and seeds, the tender shoots of clover and other plants, on blackberries, and on ants' eggs—the latter being especially relished by the chicks.

Eastern
counties,
Sussex to
Norfolk.

The much more handsome RED-LEGGED PART-
RIDGE (*Caccabis rufa*) is not a British bird at all, in the strict acceptance of the term, for it was originally introduced into our islands upwards of a hundred years ago. In spite, however, of its being well able to take care of itself, it still remains a comparatively rare and local bird, probably because the exact ground—warm sandy soils—suited to its increase is not sufficiently widespread. There are many game preservers who view the introduction of the Red-legged Partridge into this country as a mixed blessing; indeed, on some estates on to which the bird has spread it is persecuted almost as relentlessly as a Crow or a Magpie; and this because of its extraordinarily pugnacious disposition. The English Partridge is no match for it, and in certain districts has been almost exterminated by its more quarrelsome ally. By the way, for stating this in an account of the life-history of the Red-legged Partridge in my work on "Our Rarer Birds" I was taken to task by one of my reviewers;

I think it was in the *Zoologist*. I can assure this reviewer that in some parts of Kent the "Red-leg" is detested, and its eggs broken wherever and whenever found; and as an instance of its antipathy to the English Partridge I can name reliable witnesses of actual fights between the two birds; nay, more, where it has actually been watched killing an entire brood of English Partridges just as they had got their first set of quills! Comment is needless. A very noteworthy habit of the Red-legged Partridge is that of perching in trees and on walls and even stacks. But as a rule it is a skulking creature, running through the herbage and up the hedges rather than taking wing. Its food is not known to differ from that of the English Partridge; and it has also the same gregarious instincts in autumn, and the same partiality for the stubbles and the turnips. Its loud, shrill treble whistle is heard most frequently in spring, about the period of pairing. The nesting season begins in April and lasts through May. The nest is placed in precisely similar situations to that of the preceding species, and is composed of much the same material. The eggs, however (from ten to sixteen in number), are very different, being pale brownish yellow, spotted and speckled with light and dark brown. But one brood is reared in the year, and both parents assist in the duty. In autumn and winter this bird not unfrequently wanders from the fields into the adjoining plantations and common lands. The uniform brown upper plumage, showily barred white, black, and chestnut flanks, and bright red legs, easily distinguish this species from the common Partridge.

Widely
distributed.

The fields are also the haunt of the QUAIL (*Coturnix communis*), a bird very similar in general appearance to the common Partridge, but only half the size. It is remarkable for being a bird of regular passage, coming to our islands in spring to breed, and returning to Africa in autumn. A few Quails, however, habitually winter in the south of England, but these may probably be individuals from more northern lands. The Quail is rather a late migrant, arriving in May and leaving us again in September and October. Its migrations are by no means the least interesting part of its life-history; indeed, from the days of the Patriarchs its journeys have always attracted the attention of men, for their regularity and for the enormous numbers of birds that pass to and fro. Quails migrate in vast flocks across the Mediterranean; but by the time this wave of migrants has reached our islands it is well-nigh spent, consequently we do not witness such extensive flights. The shrill, merry whistle—a *clik-a-lik*, or *lik-lik*—of the Quail from the meadow grass is one of the gladsome sounds of the fields in spring. It is a thorough ground bird, and in habits very similar to the Partridge. Its flight is quick, and the bird also runs with great speed through the herbage. The scanty nest is made upon the ground, usually among clover or growing corn, and the eggs are laid in June. These are from eight to twenty in number (the larger clutches probably the production of two or more hens), yellowish olive in ground colour, spotted, blotched, and freckled with dark brown and olive-brown. But one brood is reared, and the female appears to take the entire charge of it.

Our last characteristic bird of the fields is the LAND-RAIL (*Crex pratensis*), also widely known by the name of CORN CRAKE. No bird is more readily identified, the loud, harsh, far-sounding double note of *crake-crake, crake-crake*, rendering the slightest chance of confusion impossible. This note makes the fields ring again, especially at night, from the date of the bird's arrival here in April until near the middle of August. No bird that frequents the fields is so skulking in its habits as the Land-Rail, and nine times out of ten its note is the only sign of its presence. Sometimes, however—especially during the earlier months of its stay—it may be seen in the open, running down the hedge-sides, or crossing the bare pastures from one meadow to another, or even on the country highways between the cornfields. Just after its arrival, the Land-Rail wanders about a good deal from farm to farm; but as soon as it has paired and selected a nesting-ground it becomes much more sedentary, seldom straying beyond a field or so away. The remarkable speed at which this bird can run through the grass has given rise to the idea that the Land-Rail is a ventriloquist, its voice sounding now here, now there, in rapid sequence. This bird is ever flushed with difficulty, and when hard pressed will make for the hedges, and skulk in some nook until all danger has passed. Its food is composed of worms, slugs, insects, larvæ, tender shoots of herbage, and seeds of grasses. As soon as the grass is sufficiently high and thick, the Land-Rail begins to breed. Its nest is always on the ground in the open fields, amongst the clover, the mowing grass, and less frequently the

Widely distributed.

corn ; and is made of dry, coarse herbage, withered leaves, and perhaps a few scraps of moss, well and very neatly lined with fine grass, much of it often green ; indeed, I have seen nests of this species as smooth and trim inside as any nest of the Missel-Thrush. From eight to twelve eggs are laid, pale buff in ground colour, spotted and blotched with reddish brown and violet-gray. Some examples are very pale bluish green in ground colour, and the spots very small and sprinkled over most of the surface. A light egg is often found in a clutch of the usual colour. I have on several occasions found two nests of this bird within a very few yards, and also known it to remove its eggs entirely if much disturbed, as, for instance, after a field has been mown. In autumn the Land-Rail may often be met with in the clover and turnip-fields, but as it is silent now its presence here is often overlooked. It leaves our fields in September for a southern haunt.

In addition to the foregoing species, the fields and downs are the resort of a great many birds that do not make their nests upon them. The fields are the great storehouses of the birds—their feeding-grounds ; and especially is this apparent during three seasons out of the four. What numbers of birds, for instance, rendezvous upon them in seed-time and in harvest ; what feathered hosts seek their sustenance thereon when the crops are garnered ; what a great variety make them their daily resort during winter ! A ramble, therefore, through the fields cannot be complete without a passing notice of the most characteristic species. For instance,

there is scarcely a field that the Rook and the STARLING do not frequent every month in the year—almost all the food of these two birds is obtained upon them. During every ramble over the fields we may see the blue-black Rooks and the purple, glossy Starlings walking about the pastures or new-tilled lands. The Rooks are wary enough, and take wing before we can get near them, but the Starlings are tamer, and admit of closer scrutiny. If in autumn or winter, the latter birds are generally in flocks which fly off in compact bunches, or gyrate in the air like animated network, ere they settle again with wonderful precision, like well-drilled troops. Then the pert, lively JACKDAW comes to the fields and mingles with the Rooks. Repeatedly, too, the black and white MAGPIE settles on the pastures, and with long tail erect hops about the dung-heaps, or even saucily perches on the back of a grazing sheep. All the summer through the CUCKOO beats about the downs and fields, and often we may see the long-tailed, Hawk-like bird fly across the pastures from the trees in one hedgerow to those in another, whilst his merry note is one of the commonest sounds heard within them. Then the KESTREL in slow and stately flight wings his way across the pastures and the stubbles, hovering on trembling pinions as he scans each foot of ground below for the field mice on which he fares. Then, does not the BARN OWL visit them in the evening's dusk and take up the chase where the Kestrel left it, harrying the meadows and the stubbles for similar creatures? Again, all day long during spring

and summer the air above the fields is thronged with birds of the Swallow tribe—with HOUSE MARTINS and BARN SWALLOWS. Yes, there they are from dawn to sunset, skimming to and fro above the meadow grass, or up and down the pastures, now over this field, now over that, in and out, and round about the grazing cattle, or fleeting over the ripening grain. All the spring and summer through the fields are full of Swallows; and then again, the dusky, scythe-winged SWIFTS hawk above the herbage, or career to and fro on never-tiring wings in the higher air, ever and anon screeching forth their piercing notes, sounding full of their impetuous happiness. Many of the wet pastures and higher stubbles are the home of the LAPWING, which even breeds upon the fields, and often in autumn congregates in flocks thereon. Then, as the autumn days draw on, vast flights of Finches make their appearance on the clover-fields and weedy pastures. There may the charming GOLD-FINCH be seen, clinging to the thistle-heads in the old meadow, scattering the downy seeds to the winds, as it adroitly poises on the fluffy crowns, and picks away right heartily to reach the much-prized fare. Or parties of BRAMBLINGS descend upon the grass lands where manure is being spread; and as likely as not the gay CHAFFINCH and the stranger REDWING are among the company. At the same season, too, the old stubbles which have been sown down with clover are the haunt of the charming little REDPOLE, one of the tamest and most trustful of birds, now in flocks, allowing you to watch its actions in searching

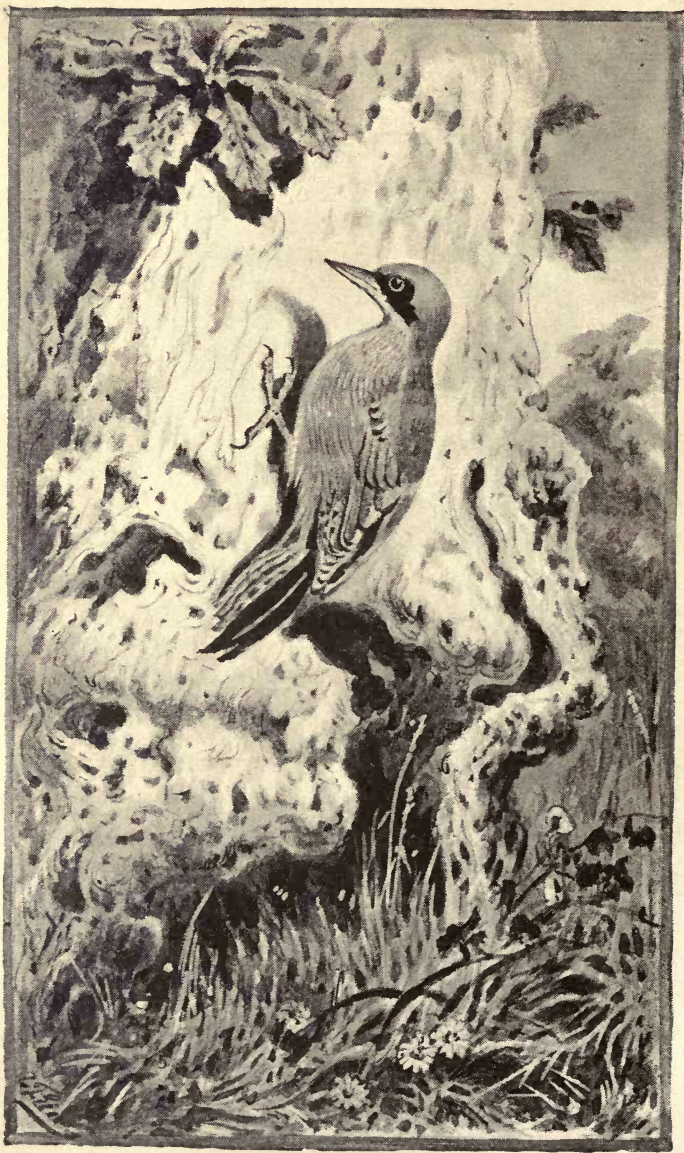
for the tiny seeds without show of fear. In fine, the fields are always full of interest for the ornithologist, and no matter which the season he may walk upon them, he can rest assured that birds in plenty and variety will reward his scrutiny of them.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Wheatear . .	March to September	Oft-repeated <i>chic-chac-chac</i>	Gray and white above, wings black, tail black and white, underparts pale buff
Whinchat . .	April to September	Monotonous <i>utac-tac-tac</i>	Dark brown above, rich rufous below
Tree Pipit . .	April to September and October	Oft-repeated <i>pip-pip</i>	Brown above, buffish white below
Yellow Wagtail	Partial Migrant	Shrill <i>chiz-zit</i>	Olive-green above, head and underparts yellow
Skylark . . .	Resident	Liquid double note	Brown above, buffish white below, breast spotted
Common Bunting . .	Resident	Monotonous <i>zit</i>	Brown above, grayish or buffish white below, breast spotted
Partridge . .	Resident	Shrill <i>kirr-rr-ric</i>	Brownish above, grayish below, chocolate horse - shoe - shaped mark on belly
Red-legged Partridge .	Resident	Shrill treble note, something like preceding	Rich brown above, gray and chestnut below, throat black and white
Quail . . .	May to October	Shrill <i>clik-a-lik</i>	Brownish buff, palest on underparts
Land-Rail . .	April to September	Harsh <i>crrake-crrake</i>	Brownish buff, marked with blackish brown above, chin to breast gray, remainder of underparts buffish white except flanks, which are chestnut, barred with white

RAMBLE V.

THROUGH THE WOODS.

OUR fair English woods are the chosen haunt of many of the shyest and most interesting birds. Within their shady depths at all seasons of the year there is much taking place among our feathered friends to instruct and amuse us. I think of all places, woods are my favourite haunt. I love seclusion and retirement, I revel in arboreal solitude, ay, as much as these forest birds themselves. The curtain of greenery in summer, and the network of bare twigs and branches in winter, shut off from view all human works, and leave me surrounded by the feathered creatures I love so well, where, uninterrupted and alone, I may commune with Nature's wondrous children to my heart's content. No matter what the hour or season, the woods are always attractive. Whether gay with the smiles and the gladness of spring and summer, or cloaked in the sobbing sadness of autumnal decay and winter whiteness, shy birds dwell within them, and live their happy lives among the wild seclusion the arboreal depths afford. No other district can compare favourably with the woodlands in changeful beauty, in harmony of colour, and in grace.



What, for instance, can be more enticing than a ramble through the woodlands in early spring? Truly, the woods are then a waking world, made gladsome by the songs of wild birds from the trees, and spangled with the earliest blooms in Flora's train. The vernal buds are bursting their brown sheaths in the warm sunshine; the fronds of the giant ferns are quietly forcing their way to the light through the mantle of crumpled leaves which has sheltered them through the cheerless winter; the aroma from the gums upon the buds is sweeter far than perfumes of Eastern spices to the nostrils. Within the precincts of the woods some of the earliest migratory birds make their appearance, bearing spring upon their tiny wings from the far and sunny South.

Prominent among these springtide strangers that appear in the woods with April's advent is the WILLOW WREN (*Phylloscopus trochilus*). It may be easily recognised by its bright olive-green dress, its graceful form, and almost Tit-like activity. No language of mine can ever express my amazement and my feelings of joyful wonder upon seeing one of these little birds just after its arrival in our English woods. With the dawn of morning the tiny creature is there—how it has come, what exact course it has followed, whether it has had a safe and an easy flight from Africa, or an adventurous and a difficult one, we know not. But there is the delicate little feathered mite before us, hopping silently about the still leafless hazel-bushes, as if yet far from feeling at home in its new quarters. Here, in chilly, leafless England, all is so different from the verdant tropical oases of the South. All day long have I watched one of these new arrivals

Widely
distributed.

skipping about the twigs, and flitting in and out of the earliest springtime foliage, every now and then bounding into the air to capture a passing fly, yet silent and ill at ease. All day has it kept to one particular corner of the woods, by the banks of the flooded trout-stream ; and at nightfall I have suddenly missed the little creature, as it has hidden itself in some warm nook to sleep. A few hours' rest, however, seems to work wonders in its temperament. With the first flush of sunrise, the newly-arrived Willow Wren begins its daily quest for food, this time more vigorous and at home. Insects are scarcer here as yet than in the southern haunts beyond the sea, and it may be the greater amount of energy required to find them creates a more cheerful mood. Anyway, as the sun rises higher in the heavens, and the spring air becomes warm and balmy, the little bird seems compelled to tell its new-found happiness to the woods—perhaps to learn if any others of its race have arrived, for the party that journeyed north together became separated in the darkness of the night, and its tenderly sweet little call-note is heard for the first time—a low, inexpressively beautiful *for-eet* (whistled softly instead of spoken). Then perhaps a song is uttered—the first music the tiny bird has indulged in since it began to sicken for the spring moult in some far-off oasis of the Sahara, or perhaps since it left these self-same woods last autumn. What a low, half-frightened song it is, just as if the singer were by no means certain of its efforts ; but the sunshine gets brighter, the air warmer, the leaves and flowers are refreshing, the increasing supply of food is encouraging, and peal after peal of

music is uttered, each refrain louder and more confident than the last, until the stranger bird seems to have got over all the troubles of the long journey here, and has abandoned itself to happiness and to love. For other little songs are now heard in answering voices, here and there among the nut-bushes and high up in the catkined birches. The hen-birds have come at last, the cocks gallantly awaiting their arrival before beginning their concert, and rivalry is a strong incentive to song. Three days after the arrival of these first venturesome migrants the woods, from dawn to even, are absolutely alive with Willow Wrens, and echoing with their bridal hymns of joy.

The Willow Wren and its two congeners about to be mentioned are birds of restless habit, incessantly hopping about the trees and bushes in quest of the insects on which they feed. Many of these are caught whilst the birds are fluttering in the air. All three species breed in May and June. The Willow Wren pairs soon after its arrival, and its nest is usually placed on a bank amongst the herbage. It is a loosely made structure, composed of dry grass and leaves, moss, rootlets, and lined with hair and a profusion of feathers, semi-domed in form, having the appearance of being overturned. Some nests are much more globular than others. The six or seven eggs are white, blotched and spotted with pale reddish brown. The young are soon abandoned when they leave the nest. Only one brood is reared, and soon after the autumn moult the southern flight commences.

Two other species belonging to the little group

of Warblers of which the Willow Wren is typical, also make the British woods their haunt in summer. Next to the Wheatear the CHIFFCHAFF (*P. rufus*) is perhaps the earliest of our spring-tide migrants. I have even heard his monotonous song of *chiff-chaff chiff-chaff*, or *chiff-cha-aff*, on the last days of March, during an exceptionally favourable season, and this as far north as the "Dukeries," in Notts. On an average he is here by the first three days of April. It is not quite so big as the Willow Wren, its plumage is browner, not so bright and clear an olive, and its dark, nearly black tarsus is ever an un-failing distinction. The Chiffchaff is one of those birds far more often heard than seen; and this remark becomes more and more apt as the vernal foliage decks the trees and effectually hides the sombre little singer from all but the very closest scrutiny. In other respects its habits closely resemble those of the Willow Wren. The nest is very similar, but is often placed several feet from the ground amongst ivy or brambles. The six eggs are white, somewhat sparingly spotted with dark reddish brown and gray. The larger and handsomer WOOD WREN (*P. sibilatrix*) is even more of a woodland bird than either of the two above-mentioned Warblers, and also the last to make its appearance, coming towards the end of April. As we wander through the woods in the early days of May we may often hear his monotonous "song," a few rapidly uttered notes, becoming quicker and quicker, and ending in a harsh and tremulous trill. The song of the Wood Wren is always disappointing. The first few notes are sweet and full of promise, arrest the

Principally
English
type.

Principally
English
type.

ear at once and charm the listener, but before he has time to realise its beauty it has drifted away into harshness. Time after time is this repeated, for the Wood Wren is a pertinacious singer; and should you be fortunate enough to see him you will find that all his plumage seems to quiver with excitement as he sings, and that he occasionally warbles as he flits from one branch to another. The Wood Wren loves the higher branches; and I have noticed that he will confine himself to one particular tree for hours together, yet keeping so close among the leaves as to defy detection. It is by far the shyest of the three species, and usually resents close observation by hurrying off to more secluded haunts. The food of the Wood Wren is insects and larvæ, but in late summer both this bird and its two congeners will eat fruit. The nest is always placed among the vegetation on the ground in the woods, and resembles that of its congeners in form, but it is lined with hair alone, feathers never being used. The half-dozen eggs are larger than the Chiffchaff's, white in ground colour, freckled and spotted with purplish brown and gray. They are more thickly marked than the eggs of the Chiffchaff. But one brood is reared in the season, and the departure south is made early in autumn—in September. The large size, beautiful yellowish green upper plumage, pale eyestripe, and nearly white underparts, characterise this species.

The three species here enumerated are practically all the British Warblers (*SYLVINIÆ*) that love a strictly woodland haunt; and even of these the Willow Wren especially may oft be met with elsewhere. One other sweet singer, more nearly

South of
Yorks, and
east of
Devon.

allied to the Robin, however, is partial to a forest resting-place, and that is the charming NIGHT-INGALE (*Erithacus lusciniæ*). It is only our southern and eastern woods that are favoured with the presence of this sweet musician, easily recognised by his rich brown dress and chestnut tail, and by his Robin-like ways. His kinship with our little red-breasted friend is apparent to the most casual observer; the way he flicks his tail and wings and drops from the bushes on to the open drives or leaf-strewn ground is quite enough to proclaim his affinity, even without looking at his cosily concealed nest. The Nightingale, *par excellence*, is the minstrel of the woods, especially such as are damp and well watered, and withal a trustful if a wary one. Many and many a time whilst seated in the southern woods have I had this dark-eyed singer pour out his rich, full music almost at my feet, so close that every movement of his throat could be discerned during the progress of his song. In spring he is almost as pugnacious as a Robin, and drives off all intruding birds from his own particular privacy, chasing them through the branches with harsh croaks of displeasure. It will be observed that the Nightingale, like the Robin, is a bird of the lower vegetation, seldom visiting the trees, always preferring to skulk where the brushwood is thickest. Worms, insects and their larvæ, and fruit, form the food of this bird. The nesting season of the Nightingale begins in May. The nest is usually made among the herbage below brushwood, but occasionally among the exposed roots of a tree on a bank, or among ivy, and is made externally of dry grass and other vegetation

of an aquatic nature, dead leaves, especially of the oak, and lined with rootlets and hair. The four or five eggs are mottled olive-green or olive-brown, and sometimes exhibit one or two streaks of blackish brown. The Nightingale arrives in its summer haunts in April and leaves them in September.

As a rule the woods are not frequented by our smaller birds so much as an inexperienced observer might imagine. These little creatures can find ample concealment and seclusion for their needs in the shrubberies, the hedges, and the thickets, and consequently a casual scrutiny of the woods often ends in disappointment. Such tiny birds as are there are hard to see among the twigs and leaves, and none but the most patient are rewarded by seeing much of their ways. How hard, for instance, it is to find the Titmice, the Creeper, and the Goldcrest during the summer, only those know who have sought them at that season in their leafy haunts. Even in winter-time the CREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*), being a remarkably silent species, is one of the easiest birds to overlook. He may be identified by his mottled brown and buff upper plumage, silvery underparts, and his habit of creeping in a fly-like manner up the tree-trunks and along the larger limbs. In its habits it is very like the Woodpeckers, climbing about the timber, searching for insect life among the bark with its long slender bill, and supporting itself meanwhile by its stiff pointed tail. Its shrill note of *weet* is heard most frequently in spring. The breeding season begins in April, and the site for the nest is often behind a piece of loose bark, in a crack in the trunk, or

Widely
distributed.

even in some crevice in a stack of cordwood. Fine twigs form most of the outer structure, dry grass, moss, and a lining of bark-strips complete the pretty home. The six or eight eggs are pure white, spotted with brownish red and gray. More noisy and of brighter colours, as we have already seen (see p. 40), the NUTHATCH is found especially in our southern woods, but in autumn and winter he becomes almost silent, and flits and creeps about the trees unheard.

Widely
distributed.

There is another species which here claims a passing notice, and that is the GOLDCREST (*Regulus cristatus*), remarkable for being the smallest British bird, something like a Willow Wren in general appearance, but easily distinguished by the black and orange crest and the white wing-bars. Truly, indeed, it is a frail little creature, and as beautiful as graceful. It is more a dweller in the larch and fir woods than in those where the trees are deciduous; and here in the early springtime its short but delicately sweet song may be heard on every side, as rival males sing in concert. Its charming nest—made in April or May—is slung hammock-like at the end of some drooping fir-branch, and is almost as remarkable for beauty and design as that of the Long-tailed Titmouse or the Chaffinch, moss, lichens, spiders' webs, hairs, and feathers forming the usual materials. The eggs, from five to eight in number, are of a reddish tinge, freckled with reddish brown, the colouring matter sometimes forming a zone or cap at the larger end of the egg. The food of the Goldcrest is composed of insects and seeds, according to season. In autumn these birds become gregarious, and then wander far

and wide in quest of food. Still keeping to the conifer woods, but only in the more northern forests, we may find the SISKIN (*Fringilla spinus*) during the summer months engaged in bringing up its brood. It is about the same size as the Lesser Redpole, resembles the Greenfinch in colour, but is instantly distinguished by its black crown, nape, and chin. Then again the call-note of the male at the breeding-grounds is very peculiar—a long-drawn *seez-zinn*. The ordinary call-note is very like that of the Redpole and other small Finches, a rapid twitter. No nest is perhaps more difficult to find than the Siskin's, for it is usually hidden far up among the dark crests of the firs—a tiny cradle fashioned almost as neatly as the Redpole's, of grass, moss, and roots, and warmly lined with down. The five or six eggs are pale bluish green, spotted and speckled with reddish brown and gray, and occasionally streaked with darker brown. Towards winter the Siskin becomes gregarious and social, and draws southwards, where we shall meet with it again during the course of future rambles (see p. 140).

Scotch type.
Winter
elsewhere,
except
accidentally.

One other bird should here be mentioned as a dweller in the pine woods. This is the COMMON CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*), distinguished from the other Finches by having the mandibles crossed, and by its showy dress, the body plumage of the male being red, the female greenish yellow, and the wings and tail of both brown. Crossbills are irregular visitors to the southern woods, but in the north are more or less resident among the firs. They breed early, of all British Finches the earliest, and the nest, made in a crotch near the top of the tree by preference, is

Scotch type.
Winter
elsewhere,
but breeds
locally in
England.

very like that of the Bullfinch, and the four or five eggs are exactly the same in colour as those of the Greenfinch. Very early in the year the low sweet song of this bird is heard in the native woods, and the far-sounding call-note, *si-si-si*, even more incessantly. The food of this bird in summer is largely composed of insects and larvæ, but the most universal fare is the cone of the spruce and larch. In autumn fruit is eaten, and in winter various seeds. After the young are reared the Crossbill flocks, and wanders far and wide for the remainder of the year. It then visits our southern woods and fields, trooping from tree to tree in actions like those of the Titmice, creeping about the branches with little show of fear at our close observation.

Scotch pine
forests.

Widely
distributed.

With a glance at the Titmice we bring our list of the smaller birds of the woodlands to a close. Of the half-dozen British species, the CRESTED TITMOUSE (*Parus cristatus*) and the GREAT TITMOUSE (*P. major*) are perhaps the most attached to the woods. All may be found within them, summer and winter alike, skipping about the twigs and branches and enlivening the leafy solitudes with their harsh yet very characteristic notes; but these two species, the former especially, habitually dwell within them. The Crested Titmouse, distinguished from all others by its long black and white crest, is one of the rarest and most local of British birds, attached to a few favoured pine forests in Scotland; but on the other hand the Great Titmouse, the largest of the group, and readily distinguished by the broad black stripe along the centre of the breast and belly, is very widely dispersed. The loud clear note of the

Great Titmouse—*tsee-sa, tsee-sa, tsee-sa*—in spring is very remarkable, and aids in the bird's identification. This bird makes two very distinct types of nest, just as we found to be the case with the House Sparrow. The first is made in a hole of a tree or wall, loosely put together, composed of dry grass, moss, leaves, and lined with wool, hair, and feathers. The second type is placed in the deserted nest of a Crow or Magpie, or even in the drey of a squirrel, and is globular like a Wren's. Moss forms the greater portion of the outer material of this type of nest, but the same lining is employed as for nests in holes. The six or eight eggs are white, speckled and spotted with light reddish brown. The food of this species is largely composed of insects and larvæ in summer, fruit in autumn, and seeds and larvæ for the remainder of the year. The nest of the Crested Titmouse is made in a hole in a tree or stump, of very similar materials to those used by the preceding species, and the six or seven eggs are white, thickly spotted and freckled with brownish red, often in a zone round the larger end. The food of this bird is similar to that of the other Titmice, varying according to season. The most peculiar call-note of the Crested Titmouse may be expressed by the letter R, rolled out with singular emphasis into a succession of syllables. In their actions the Titmice almost stand alone. No other birds can readily be mistaken for them. The attitudes they assume are endless in variety; they are birds that are never still. A Titmouse is seldom seen at rest for two half-minutes together; all their waking moments are spent in endless activity among the leaves and branches. It is in

autumn that the Titmice are most prominent. They are then most gregarious and social, and often assemble into scattered flocks, wandering up and down the woods in quest of food. The observer will often find other birds in their company—small Finches, Nuthatches, and Creepers; and frequently enough three or four species of Titmouse may be seen on the same tree in close companionship.

There can be little doubt that the one grand attraction of the woods to the larger birds that haunt them is the seclusion and cover they afford, especially during the season of reproduction. With birds of the Crow tribe, this is notoriously the case. Were it not for the safety yielded by the woods, even in the face of ever-watchful gamekeepers, it is more than probable that at least three of our handsomest birds would have been banished from English soil entirely. First and foremost of these is the MAGPIE (*Pica caudata*), whose rich and loricated plumage vies in metallic splendour with any that tropic woods can boast. Fifty years' incessant persecution by senseless gamekeepers, and their still less sensible masters, has failed to exterminate the Magpie from its woodland strongholds. It manages to elude the sharpest vigilance and prosper fairly well; although districts are known to me where powder, poison, and traps have worked its complete extermination. The Magpie is one of the showiest of our native birds, and no other living thing lends the woods a greater charm. Birds of even more gaudy plumage haunt them, but they hide themselves away among the brushwood and the leafy branches. The Magpie is fond of flying to and fro between the forests

Widely
distributed.

and the more open country, and his rich contrast of black and white plumage renders him conspicuous enough, either against the background of green foliage or the bare gray branches. His harsh chatter, heard most frequently at nightfall, often tells the whereabouts of his roosting-place ; and in early spring especially he may be seen in parties. The massive nest of the Magpie is made in almost every kind of tree, high and low alike, and as the birds pair for life it is used year after year for breeding purposes. Early in the spring the old birds either begin patching up their old home or making a new one. Sticks cemented with mud, and eventually lined with the same, form the outer shell, which is thickly lined with fine roots. The great peculiarity of the Magpie's nest is the enormous roof of sticks which is built over it. The six or eight eggs vary a good deal in colour, ranging from bluish white to bluish green in ground, spotted, freckled, and blotched with greenish brown and sparingly with purplish gray. But one brood is reared in the year. During the nesting season the Magpie becomes less noisy, and is very careful not to betray the site of its nest, although this caution is useless, for the big stick-built home is conspicuous enough among the still leafless branches. The food of the Magpie consists of carrion, insects, acorns, eggs, worms, grubs ; in fact, anything and everything edible the bird may come across.

Another showy bird of the Crow tribe which dwells in our woods is the JAY (*Garrulus glan-* Chiefly English ; becoming rarer in Scotland ; still rarer in Ireland.
darius). No other British species can readily be confused with it. The general body plumage is vinaceous brown ; but the rump and tail-coverts

are white, and the crest is streaked with black, the latter being the colour of the moustachial lines. The tail is brownish black, the wings black, chestnut, and white, the coverts being beautifully barred with black, white, and blue alternately. Persecuted for his real or imaginary depredations amongst the game, the Jay is fast becoming a rare bird in many districts. We cannot wander far through a wood inhabited by Jays without soon becoming aware of the fact. Nine times out of ten they will be heard long before they are seen, and in many cases, especially where the underwood is dense, they manage to elude every effort to observe them. The scream of the Jay is very characteristic—a loud, harsh *rark-rark* or *raa-raa-rark*. I know of several beautiful Kentish woods that are the paradise of the Jay—places where the keeper never molests it, for the coverts are given up to the foxes, and game is of only minor importance. The Jay loves a wood where the undergrowth is dense—woods where the ground is bare offer no attraction. No underwood is more dense or secluded than that which is composed of sapling Spanish chestnuts, which in many parts of Kent are grown for hop-poles. Among this cover the Jay is in his glory, and from June until the following March troop after troop of noisy birds may be constantly heard. They tell the whereabouts of the foxes—reynard cannot stir without his movements being noted by the noisy Jays—and even when he takes his midday siesta amongst the long grass on the side of the drives the birds congregate in the trees above him, and scold and storm so long as he remains. The Jay is com-

paratively a harmless bird. He may steal a few eggs in the spring, but his food consists of worms and grubs, of acorns, peas, and cherries, and even, when hard pressed by severity of weather, of any garbage he may chance to find. The Jay breeds rather late, and makes a new nest every year, choosing a site among the brushwood, often in a holly, or in a mass of woodbine. This nest is very similar to that of the Magpie, only the roof of sticks is absent, and the materials are not quite so coarse. The eggs, laid early in May, are from five to seven in number, bluish green densely marbled and mottled with olive-brown, and occasionally streaked with darker brown. The young and their parents wander about in company as soon as the former are able to leave the nest.

In times within the memory of living men the Raven was a regular dweller in the woods, but gamekeepers and cultivation have at last proved too much for him, and these places know him no more. The rock-bound coasts are now his great refuge, and there we may meet with him anon (see p. 210). His representative in the woods to-day is the CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*), as cunning and crafty a bird as ever wore feathers. Nowhere in English woods can this bird be considered common; and there can be little doubt that it is fast following the Raven to utter banishment. It may readily be distinguished from the Rook by its green instead of purple-shot plumage, by having the face covered with feathers, and by its harsher caw, which sounds more like *craw*, occasionally modified into *car-ruck*. The Carrion Crow is rather a late breeder, and its nest and

Principally
English
type.

eggs are very similar to those of the Rook. It does not, however, breed in societies; indeed, it is one of the most solitary of birds, and when once the young are safely reared is rarely seen, even in the company of its mate—so far as English woods are concerned. It is almost omnivorous in diet, and consequently is apt to help itself to poultry, eggs, and game whenever a chance is presented.

Principally
English
type. Not
known to
breed in
Ireland.

English
type. Yorks
southwards.

The woods are also the home of the Woodpeckers. Not, perhaps, so much from a love for seclusion do these birds frequent the forests, but their insect food is derived almost entirely from the trees. Of the three British species, perhaps the GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Picus major*) is most widely distributed. His large size—about that of the Song Thrush—and black and white plumage, distinguish him from his congeners. Its call-note, heard most frequently in spring, is a shrill *whit*. The next common species is the GREEN WOODPECKER (*Gecinus viridis*), although in some localities, especially in the southern woods, it is by far the most widely distributed of the three. He is the largest of them all, measuring from twelve to fourteen inches in length, and differing from the others in the general colour of his plumage, which is green and yellow. So far as my own observations go, this handsome bird is the least shy of the British Woodpeckers, and the most often seen. I often watch him fly from tree to tree in drooping flight, and either settle on the bark at once, or perch among the slender twigs, usually uttering his loud laughing cry—*kyu kyu*, or *hi-hi-hi*—as soon as his wings are at rest. It will be noticed that this bird becomes exceptionally noisy before rain, just

like the Peacock is wont to be. The last of the Woodpeckers we notice here is the LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Picus minor*). It may be roughly described as a miniature of the Great Spotted Woodpecker, about half the size. It is certainly the most local of the three, but in some few favoured districts is far from uncommon. The habits of the Woodpeckers are all very similar. These birds search the trunks and limbs of the trees most industriously for their insect food, climbing with practised skill, assisted by their stiff, sharply pointed tail-feathers. All live on insects; all are of solitary habits, and all rear their young in holes among the timber, making no nest, and laying eggs of exceptional gloss and whiteness.

English
type. Yorks
southwards.

From the Woodpeckers we pass to the Pigeons. The rambler through the woods will meet with two species at all seasons of the year, and with one other during the summer months alone. Most widely dispersed is the RING DOVE (*Columba palumbus*), whose soft, rich *coo* is one of the most characteristic sounds of the woods in spring and early summer. The large size, the patches of yellowish white on either side of the neck—hence the trivial name—and the white wing-bars, most conspicuous during flight, are points that distinguish the Ring Dove from its congeners. The nest of the Ring Dove is a slight and slovenly structure, placed on the branches of the forest trees—a mere platform of sticks, on which the two white eggs are laid. Our second species, the STOCK DOVE (*C. ænas*), is often confused with the foregoing, although it is little more than half the size, and still more frequently with the Rock Dove—a bird that never

Widely
distributed.

English
type.

frequents woods at all. The rudimentary black wing-bars, the absence of the neck patches, and the slate-gray back and rump, are never-failing points of distinction of the Stock Dove. Its note is not so musical as the Ring Dove's, being harsh and guttural. Unlike that bird, also, it often nests in hollows and crevices of the decaying timber, and even in holes in quarries and in rabbit-burrows. Unlike the Ring Dove, the Stock Dove has a decided social tendency during the breeding season, and very often numbers of nests may be found within a very small area of the forest. The two eggs of this bird are also remarkable for their creamy tinge. Both these Doves rear brood after brood from early spring until the autumn, when they unite into enormous flocks to feed upon the stubbles and pastures, returning to the woods at night to roost. Many a pleasant hour may be spent at eventide within the woods, watching the homecoming Pigeons, those localities where fir-trees abound being exceptionally favoured. The other British woodland Pigeon is the TURTLE DOVE (*Turtur auritus*), a bird of passage, wintering in Africa, and coming hither to rear its young. It favours the southern woods the most, and is by far the shyest and most retiring of its order. It is far more often heard than seen, and the woods it frequents are filled with its rich, soft cooing notes from morn to even, especially just after its arrival in early May. Its small size, and the nearly black patches on the sides of the neck, are sufficient points of distinction. The Turtle Dove makes a scant and slovenly nest, and its two eggs—about the size of a Blackbird's—are pale yellowish white. The food of this bird, like that of its allies, is

English
type; but
breeds
sparingly
in Ireland.

composed of insects, fruit, grain, seeds, and tender shoots of herbage. It usually departs southwards again in September.

Almost everywhere the woodlands are sacred to Game—they are the jealously guarded sanctuary of the PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*), with whom, according to the game preservers' views, no other large wild birds may live in peace. Even the naturalist may be forbidden to enter these shady preserves in quest of knowledge, unless he makes friends with their keeper first. Everything likely to disturb the royal bird sacred to sport, is religiously tabooed. And yet the Pheasant is an alien after all, in spite of his being so thoroughly at home, for his natural habitat is far away in the East, on the borders of the Black and Caspian Seas. Although he has got to be looked upon as almost indigenous, it is most probable that this handsome bird would soon become extinct without man's protection. From the naturalist's point of view, Pheasants are very interesting birds, and I love to watch their ways in the woods. Certainly they are an ornament to the forest, as we catch hurried glimpses of the splendid long-tailed creatures, running timidly along the drives, or rising with a clashing clatter among the under-wood, topping the saplings on whirring wing, and startling us from time to time as they hurry away alarmed at our footsteps on the crumpled leaves, or bramble-laced grass and fern. Then it is most interesting to watch their wiles as they endeavour to elude discovery. Only the other day an instance of this kind came under my notice. I had been listening to the pertinacious crowing of a cock Pheasant amongst a tangled thicket, and

Widely
distributed
wherever
preserved.

after some little trouble I succeeded in flushing him from the cover, and watched him fly from the wood towards a small grove of trees standing alone on a wide stretch of open ground covered with cotton-grass and rushes. Here he pitched and commenced to walk about, picking here and there like a barn-door fowl. The moment I got out of the wood and began walking towards him, he eyed me suspiciously for a moment, and then hurriedly crouched to the ground. Here, motionless as marble he remained, watching my every movement intently. Pretending not to notice him, I made him believe that he was unseen, and that I was about to pass his hiding-place. He allowed me to get exactly within one yard before he rose like a rocket and made for the wood again; yet in that fleeting moment I saw how closely he had crouched to the ground, lying almost flat, with neck stretched out and pressed to the grass, and long tail like a single feather extended behind. In this manner, or by running stealthily through the grass, the Pheasant always tries to escape danger, only using his wings when absolutely compelled. The naturalist will also find that when the woods are carpeted with snow, the Pheasant is yet still more reluctant to rise, and his tracks on every side show how small his inclination is for flight. Here I might just remark in passing, that the footprints of the female Pheasant are much smaller than those of the male; and not only so, she runs with lower steps, often making a furrow on the surface several inches before the actual impression of her feet. The loud, discordant *corrk* of the Pheasant will be familiar to every wanderer in the woods, and this

crow is most frequently repeated before dusk, as the birds are seeking their roosts. Pheasants are polygamous, and several females live in the society of one male during the pairing season until the eggs are laid. The hen scratches a slovenly nest under a mass of brambles or amongst fern, rushes, and underwood, where she lays from eight to twelve drab-coloured eggs. With the young chicks the cock has nothing to do, and all the care of bringing them to maturity rests on the mother. Pheasants feed on grain of all kinds, seeds, berries, acorns, and tender shoots, and on insects and worms. The magnificent CAPERCAILLIE (*Tetrao urogallus*) Central Scotland. after many vicissitudes bids fair to become once more a dominant species in the northern pine forests, but as it is at present exceedingly local, this passing allusion is sufficient for the purpose of the present work.

Another bird which, for the sport it yields and the exceeding delicacy of its flesh, is almost as jealously guarded and preserved as the Pheasant, is the WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticola*). Structurally Widely distributed. More local in summer. it has nothing to do with the Gallinaceous birds, being closely allied to the Snipes—a little group in the great natural order of the CHARADRIIDÆ or Waders. From many points of view the Woodcock is an exceedingly interesting bird. True, it is by no means common, especially in summer; yet there are many English woods where it remains to breed, and where, from its skulking habits, it is apt to be overlooked altogether. No other bird is more associated with autumn by nine persons out of ten than the Woodcock; and rightly so, for its advent in October tells of winter's nearness, just as the Cuckoo speaks of

coming summer in April. The Woodcock skulks much during the day; but at dusk its activity begins, and then it betakes itself from its forest retreats to its feeding-grounds in the swampy corners of the fields or woods, or by the margin of the stream. Its food consists of worms and insects. The Woodcocks that breed in this country set about operations in April. At this period the habits of the bird become less skulking. The male may then be seen, especially at early morning and in the evening, flying up and down the forest paths or along the borders of the woods, uttering his whirring love-note. At this season the cocks become pugnacious, and often fight over their affairs of amour. The Woodcock makes a slight nest among the drifts of dead leaves in some snug, dry corner of the woods, and the four large buffish brown eggs, spotted and blotched with reddish brown and gray, are exceedingly beautiful objects. The Woodcock is said to convey its young to the feeding-grounds, and much controversy has arisen as to the manner in which the feat is accomplished. The plumage of the Woodcock is remarkably rich in colour and of exceeding variety. The upper parts are chestnut, mottled with black and gray; the underparts are buff barred with brown—a protective dress which shields the bird from its enemies by assimilating closely with the colours around.

Widely but
locally
distributed.

In some few of our woodlands the observer will be fortunate enough to come across a colony of HERONS (*Ardea cinerea*). Like a rookery, a heronry is a fixture. Season after season the birds return to their old nests in the tree-tops to rear their young, and the stirring scene is ever

full of interest to the lover of bird life. The graceful Herons may be seen poised on the topmost twigs of the trees, or flying to and fro and round and round above their flat stick-built nests. The Heron breeds early in the south of England, laying its four or five greenish blue eggs in the beginning of April, if the season is favourable. Sometimes the heronry is situated far from the fishing grounds, and then the old birds may be watched passing to and fro as regularly as Rooks until the young can fly, when the colony disperses for a season. Fish, frogs, and water insects form its usual food ; but it will often snap up a mouse or a rat, or even the chicks of the Coot and the Moorhen. Many a pleasant hour may be spent in the woods frequented by Herons in watching their return at evening to roost in the old accustomed trees ; and every lover of Nature must regret that the birds are not more common, and the sight of the returning birds at sunset a more usual one to the naturalist. The gray general colour of the Heron, its black crest, black and white neck, and broad nearly black wings, together with its large size (length three feet), and long legs, make its identification a most easy task.

With a glimpse at the wood-haunting Owls and the Birds of Prey we will bring the present ramble to a close. The woods are a refuge for at least six of these interesting birds. They seek most of their food, it is true, upon the more open country, but the woods are their sanctuary, the trees their fastness, during their hours of rest, and during the vitally important period that they rear their offspring. Perhaps the best known of the Owls is the TAWNY OWL (*Strix aluco*), a dweller

Widely
distributed.

in the forests, where its far-sounding *hoo-hoo-hoo* at sunset unfailingly proclaims its presence. Here in the forest glades during the bright moonlight nights we may watch it flying to and fro between its nest and the mice-infested fields. By stationing ourselves near the hollow tree which contains the nest, we may watch the parent birds feeding their young during all the short hours of a summer's night; and the noisy cries of the clamouring young sound distinctly after each bird's return with prey. It is rarely that the Tawny Owl comes abroad in daylight, for then it sleeps in its old haunt—usually its nesting-place—in the hollow trees or rocks, amongst masses of ivy, or in the dense crowns of the fir-trees. The large size (length nineteen inches), absence of ear-tufts, mottled brown, black, and chestnut upper parts, white spotted wing-coverts, and buffish underparts indistinctly streaked and more boldly barred with brown, render this Owl's identification easy. Our other woodland Owl is the LONG-EARED OWL (*S. otus*), a resident in the pine woods by preference, and a bird that is certainly extending its range in our islands, especially in the northern districts, as spruce and fir woods are planted. Its habits much resemble those of the preceding species. It lives on mice especially, and is a very early breeder. Both these Owls make the slightest of nests, the Tawny Owl generally breeding in a hole in a tree or crevice in a woodland rock; the Long-eared Owl often annexing a deserted nest of the Crow or Magpie or Hawk. Both lay white eggs, those of the former species usually being three or four, those of the latter five or six in number. Many Long-eared Owls

Widely
distributed.

visit our islands in autumn from more northern lands. The long ear-tufts, and streaked and barred underparts, distinguish this Owl from its British congeners.

The woodland birds of prey are perhaps more interesting to the observer, because their habits are readily observed. Few are the woods indeed that we can wander through, especially in spring, without noticing the KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*), hanging as if by an invisible thread from the sky. Widely distributed. The Kestrel is the commonest Hawk of the country, and is constantly thrusting itself into notice. He is easily recognised as he poises aloft on widespread wings and tail, scanning the earth below in quest of the mice and coleopterous insects on which he feeds. Then his unmistakable chattering cry is a familiar sound to the walker in the woods during May. He is now about to begin family duties, and he and his mate are busy searching for some old deserted Magpie's nest in which the hen-bird will soon lay her half-dozen handsome reddish brown eggs. All Kestrels' "nests" that I have examined sooner or later contained great numbers of pellets composed of the refuse of the food cast up by the old birds; and by examining them we may easily convince ourselves of this Hawk's sovereign usefulness to man. Each pellet contains the bones and skins of several mice, and perhaps the hard, indigestible wing-cases of certain beetles. No more harmless bird frequents the woods, yet it is shot and trapped without mercy by ignorant gamekeepers.

Very different, however, is the habit of the SPARROW-HAWK (*Accipiter nisus*). He persecutes Widely distributed.

the small birds incessantly, and even levies toll upon the young Pheasants and Partridges. The Sparrow-Hawk is a warrior bird, famous for his dash and daring, the terror of the woods and fields, and though of short and rounded wing is capable of flying like an arrow from a bow after his quarry. He is never seen to poise and hover like the Kestrel; he sights his victim and flies it down at once. The Sparrow-Hawk breeds rather earlier than the Kestrel, and, unlike that bird, always makes its own nest, which is usually placed far up some forest tree, a platform of sticks, slightly hollowed in the centre, and with no lining save a scrap or two of bark, and perhaps a few bits of down. The four or five eggs are remarkably beautiful, being pale greenish blue in ground colour, boldly splashed and spotted with brown. In some of the extensive forests in the northern parts of Scotland and on the Welsh cliffs the COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo vulgaris*) still breeds. I have seen its big nest in the crowns of the pine-trees; and from what I have observed the same place is visited annually, so that we may infer this species pairs for life. The nest is made of sticks, those in the lining often with leaves upon them (as is the case with the nest of the Sparrow-Hawk), and is very similar to that of the preceding species, only larger. The eggs, laid towards the end of April or early in May, are three or four in number, and vary from reddish to bluish white in ground colour, blotched, spotted, and mottled with reddish brown and pale gray. The food of this bird consists of small animals, such as mice and moles, small birds, coleopterous insects and frogs. Its

Scotland
and Wales.

flight is somewhat slow and laboured—indeed, all the Buzzards are sluggish in their habits—with none of the brilliant dash which characterises the Falcons ; but the bird often soars to a great height, flying in circles. Peculiarities of this bird are its large size (length nearly two feet), brown plumage, barred tail, long wings, and short tarsi.

Another species of woodland bird is the HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*) ; and fortunate the observer who may chance to know of a forest frequented by this bold and handsome Hawk. Time was when the Hobby haunted many of our wooded districts ; but they are few and far between to-day. Unlike our other Hawks the Hobby is a regular bird of passage, coming here in spring to rear its young, and departing in autumn to more southern lands. Like the Kestrel it breeds late, makes no nest, and lays its four or five eggs in some deserted home of the Crow or Magpie. These eggs are very similar to those of the Kestrel, perhaps a trifle larger and browner. Nothing can exceed the boldness or the dashing swoop of the Hobby upon its prey, waging war incessantly upon all birds and mammals it is capable of overcoming. The greed of collectors and the persecution of gamekeepers are slowly exterminating this handsome bird, to the everlasting regret of naturalists who take delight in watching the ways of this bold buccaneer of the woods. The Kites and the Buzzards—especially the HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis apivorus*)—are now little more than traditions in the field naturalist's calendar ; the Hobby is fast becoming the same. It might here, perhaps, be as well to remark that the Honey Buzzard—another summer visitor to our forests, arriving in

England and
Scotland ;
but very
local.

Very rare,
New
Forest.

April or May and leaving in September and October—still breeds in one or two favoured spots, notably the New Forest. This bird also is no nest-builder, but takes possession of the deserted cradle of some Crow or Magpie, re-lining it with green leaves. This habit of placing green vegetation in the nest is a very curious one, peculiar to a great many Raptorial birds, although the object of such a proceeding is still a mystery to us. The two or three eggs of the Honey Buzzard are creamy white in ground colour, clouded and blotched with rich purplish brown, sometimes so densely as to hide all trace of the shell colour. Their rotundity, peculiar waxy appearance, and abundance of colouring matter, readily distinguish them from the eggs of all other species. The flight of this bird is very Buzzard-like, and very beautiful; but as the Honey Buzzard obtains so much of its food on the ground it is one of the least seen of the birds of prey. Its food largely consists of the larvæ of wasps, which are dug out of their nests by the bird's claws, of mice, frogs, lizards, bees, wasps, and beetles. This bird is distinguished from all other Raptores by its feathered lores. A further distinction is the gray head.

The woods are also the resort occasionally of many other birds whose proper haunt is elsewhere, and which we have already met with or are about to do so. Notably among these may be cited the Cuckoo, the Grasshopper Warbler, the Wren, and the Thrushes. In autumn and winter especially are the woods the retreat of many birds that do not frequent them much at any other time. And then, again, if holly-trees abound in the woods they are always an attrac-

tion, especially during severe weather, for the birds that feed on the berries.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Willow Wren .	April to September and October	Soft musical <i>for-eet</i>	Olive-green above, pale greenish yellow below
Chiffchaff . .	April to October	Harsh <i>turr</i>	Browner green than preceding, grayish white below
Wood Wren .	April to September	Oft-repeated <i>deeur</i> ; alarm-note similar to Willow Wren's	Yellowish green above, white below, suffused on breast and flanks with yellow
Nightingale .	April to September	Plaintive <i>weet</i> ; alarm-note, harsh croak	Russet-brown above, tail chestnut, buffish white below
Creeper . . .	Resident	Shrill <i>weet</i>	Mottled brown and buff above, grayish white below
Goldcrest . .	Resident	Highly pitched <i>si-si-si</i>	Olive-green above, grayish brown below
Siskin . . .	Resident	Oft-repeated <i>zit</i>	Green above, yellow below, top of head and chin black
Common Cross-bill . . .	Resident	Shrill and oft-repeated <i>zit</i>	Crimson in male, greenish yellow in female
Crested Titmouse . .	Resident	Oft-repeated <i>si-si-si</i>	Above buffish brown, grayish brown below, long black and white crest
Great Titmouse	Resident	Clear <i>tsee-sa</i> , oft-repeated; <i>ping-ping</i> , <i>si-si-si</i>	Head black and white, above green and gray, below yellow and black
Magpie . . .	Resident	Harsh chatter	Black and white
Jay	Resident	Harsh <i>rark</i>	Crest white and black, vinous brown and white above, below pale vinous brown, wings black and white
Carrion Crow .	Resident	Hoarse <i>craw</i>	Uniform greenish black
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Resident	Shrill <i>click</i>	Black and white wings; and tail barred
Green Woodpecker . .	Resident	Loud clear <i>hi-hi-hi</i> or <i>kyu, kyu</i>	Green and yellow above, pale grayish green below, wings and tail barred
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Resident	Loud <i>kirrk</i>	Similar to <i>Picus major</i> but smaller

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Ring Dove . .	Resident	Soft rich <i>coo</i>	Slate-gray above, below lavender and pink
Stock Dove . .	Resident	Harsh guttural <i>coo</i>	Slate-gray above, lavender and pink below
Turtle Dove . .	May to September	Soft <i>coo</i>	Lavender and chestnut-brown above, lavender and white below
Pheasant . . .	Resident	Harsh <i>corr k</i>	Head and neck metallic green and purple; rest of plumage mottled black, gold, buff, and chestnut, with purplish sheen
Woodcock . . .	Partial Migrant (most numerous October to March)	Shrill <i>skaych</i>	Above mottled chestnut, black, and gray; below grayish buff barred with brown
Heron	Resident	Guttural scream; alarm-note, harsh croak	Slate-gray above, black and white below, wings nearly black
Tawny Owl . .	Resident	Loud <i>hoo-hoo-hoo</i>	Mottled brown, black, and chestnut above; buff, streaked and barred with brown, below
Long-eared Owl	Resident	Loud barking cry	Buff mottled with brown above, lighter buff streaked and barred with brown below
Kestrel	Resident	Shrill chatter	Chestnut spotted with black and slate-gray above, fawn-colour streaked with brown below, wings nearly black
Sparrow-Hawk	Resident	Harsh scream	Dark slate-colour above, tail barred with dark brown, rufous barred with darker brown below
Common Buzzard . .	Resident	Clear <i>pee-i-oo</i>	Brown above, paler brown below, tail barred
Hobby	April to October	Shrill chatter	Grayish black above, white streaked with blackish below
Honey Buzzard	April to October	Low chatter	Brown above and below, tail with three black bars, head gray

RAMBLE VI.

BY LAKES AND STREAMS.

WE now come to the bird life of the inland waters—those feathered dwellers by the lake and stream. Birds in plenty may be found in these localities. The rivers and pools are the home of a waterside population as specialised as it is interesting. For the sake of simplicity I have deemed it best to deal first with a little group of birds only found in summer on the banks of our northern waters. They are the birds of the moorland streams and the mountain pools which may be sought in vain near southern waters, and include one or two of the rarest British species.

Nothing can exceed the romantic grandeur of these dancing streams, set in a fringe of birch and alder trees, or the beauty of the quiet, rush-bordered mountain pools. Wherever the bed of the stream is rocky, we are almost certain of meeting with the GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla sulphurea*), a species bluish gray above, shading into green on the rump, yellow below, the male with a black throat. This graceful little bird appears upon these northern streams with the first signs of returning spring, and during the mild, breezy

Widely
distributed.
Mountain
districts in
summer ;
Lowlands
in winter.

April weather its short and fitful song may be heard as the bird flutters into the air. It is often seen first upon some rock or stone in the centre of the torrent, beating its long tail up and down as it poises on the wet, slippery surface; and when alarmed it speeds away in dipping flight to another stone further up the stream, uttering its shrill *chiz-zit* as it goes. Another peculiarity of the Gray Wagtail is its partiality for trees. It perches more freely than any other bird in this group, and may often be seen running along the broad horizontal limbs as quickly as on the ground. It feeds on insects, especially small flies and beetles, and in winter often picks up small seeds. All the Wagtails are examples of agile grace, but the present species especially so. Nothing can be more daintily graceful than the way it trips along the mud and sand by the waterside, or wades through the shallows, now and then standing in them to wash and preen its plumage. The nest of the Gray Wagtail can be sought for with greatest certainty of success during the month of May. It is rarely built far from the stream, and is often placed under a jutting rock, or a flat stone lying amongst the tangled vegetation on the bank. It is made of dry grass and rootlets, and lined with finer roots, hair, or feathers. The five or six eggs are greenish or yellowish brown, mottled and spotted with darker brown, and sometimes a few nearly black streaks occur, as if scratched on with a pen. The young and their parents keep together for some time after the former leave the nest. When severe weather comes the Gray Wagtails desert the upland streams, and during winter may be met with

more or less commonly wherever there is open water.

Here in a few chosen localities by the water-side in the grand old birch and alder copses we may sometimes meet with the PIED FLY-CATCHER (*Muscicapa atricapilla*), one of the rarest and most local of our British birds. He cannot readily be confused with any other species ; his black upper plumage and white forehead and lower parts render him easy to distinguish. His black and white wings and tail are also very conspicuous during flight. The female is browner generally, but the wings are enough to determine the species. The Pied Flycatcher is a summer migrant to this country, arriving in April and leaving in September. Its habits are very similar to those of the better known Spotted Flycatcher. It lives on insects, catching them in the same way as that bird ; but it differs considerably in the method of its nidification. We rarely see the Pied Flycatcher far away from woods and coppices where decayed trees are abundant, and in a hole of these it usually rears its young. Sometimes it uses a hole in a rock instead, just as the Redstart will. The nest is well made of dry grass, moss, wool, hair, and feathers, and the eggs, from six to eight in number, are a beautiful pale turquoise-blue without markings.

Mountainous districts of Wales, North England and East Scotland.

Upon the banks of the mountain streams and lakes we may always depend upon finding the COMMON SANDPIPER (*Totanus hypoleucus*) between the months of April and September. Its upper plumage is olive-brown, the underparts pure white, and a white band across the wings is very conspicuous during flight. It is usually flushed

Widely distributed ; commonest north of Derbyshire.

from the waterside, where it trips to and fro in quest of the worms and insects which compose its food; and the impressions of its little feet may be seen pricked in the mud and sand everywhere round the shore. When disturbed it rises hurriedly with a shrill *weet-weet*, and speeds across the water, its recurved wings often striking the surface as it flies along. It is most attached to its haunt, and summer after summer comes back to make its nest in one particular spot. Sometimes it is seen, especially during the love season, running along the rough walls or the tops of gates, with wings arched or drooping, paying court to its mate. About a month after their arrival these Sandpipers begin to breed. Their nest is seldom placed far from water of some description. If not on the absolute shore of the mountain pool, it is on the banks of one of the feeder streams near by. It is usually built under the shelter of a heather bush or a tuft of grass, and very often where the ground is sandy and pebble-strewn—a simple little nest enough, merely a hollow lined with a few bits of dead herbage. Here the female lays four eggs, very large in comparison to the size of the parent, pale buff in ground colour, blotched and spotted with dark and light brown and violet-gray. This bird will often be observed to engage in various antics when frightened from its nest, rolling and tumbling along the ground as if wounded, seeking to decoy the intruder from the sacred spot where its eggs are resting. Their colour, however, harmonises closely with surrounding objects, and they are only discovered by the closest scrutiny, save by

those whose experience has taught them just where to seek.

Far away on the northern lakes and pools, especially among that utter wilderness of rock and heath and water which forms the Outer Hebrides, in one or two highly favoured localities we may meet with the RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus hyperboreus*), a little wading bird that may be distinguished from all other species by its lobed feet and aquatic habits. It is as much of a water bird as the Moorhen or the Coot, yet no bigger than a Skylark, and remarkable for the chestnut patch on either side of the neck and its sharp-pointed beak. But small caution is required in observing these charming birds, for they are tame and confiding in the extreme. They may be seen swimming about the little pools, with head lobbing to and fro, ever and anon snapping at passing insects, or exploring the vegetation round the water for similar fare. The Red-necked Phalarope is migratory, arriving at its breeding-places in May, and by far the greater part of its time is spent in the water. It especially delights in those pools surrounded by marshy moors, and occasional patches of higher and drier ground. They are sociable little birds, and though their nests may be scattered up and down the moors, they meet at the favourite pools and swim in company all the summer through. The nest is seldom made far from water, but generally well concealed among the herbage of the moor. It is but a mere hollow, in which a few bits of dry vegetation are strewn, and the eggs, four in number, are buffish brown, spotted and blotched with dark brown and gray. It is a noteworthy

Shetlands,
Outer
Hebrides.

fact that the female Red-necked Phalarope is bigger than the male, and her colours are the brightest; the cock-bird, therefore, hatches the eggs, and takes the greater part of the duties of rearing the young. During the breeding season this species utters a low note sounding like *weet*. As soon as the young are strong upon the wing the southern movement commences, and by the end of August they have quitted their upland haunts until the following spring, wintering in warmer lands across the sea.

Still keeping to the lochs and streams of the Highlands we may by rare good fortune sometimes meet with the OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*). Slowly, but surely, this handsome bird is becoming extinct as a breeding species; indeed, but one or two pairs are now known in haunts where "once upon a time" they were by no means uncommon. It is a summer visitor to these Highland solitudes, and during the seasons of its migration is not unfrequently observed in England. It feeds on fish, catching them by plunging Gannet-like into the water as it hovers above the clear pools. It is a bird of remarkable power of wing, flying to and fro above the lochs on pinions that never seem to tire. The Osprey returns yearly to its breeding-place, which is either a tall pine-tree or an island ruin, where it makes a bulky nest of sticks and turf, lined with fine grass. The eggs, two or three in number, are yellowish white, beautifully blotched, spotted, and clouded with deep reddish or purplish brown and orange-red. A bird so rare as the Osprey can only claim a passing notice.

Two species of Divers may be met with breeding on the banks and islands of the secluded

Highland lochs. Of these the RED-THROATED DIVER (*Colymbus septentrionalis*) is by far the commonest and most widely distributed, the BLACK-THROATED DIVER (*C. arcticus*) being more local. The habits of both birds are very similar. Their true haunt is the water, where they swim and dive with marvellous skill, feeding principally on fish. They fly well, but upon the land are clumsy and awkward, shuffling along with their breasts upon the ground owing to the fact that their legs are placed so far backwards. Both birds utter a wild and piercing scream, which sounds like the shrieks of persons being tortured, most persistently in spring and before rain. Both birds breed in May and June, making slight nests of grass and aquatic herbage, a few feet from the water's edge, or on an island in the loch amongst the coarse grass. Of the two the nest of the Black-throated Diver is perhaps the most elaborate; the Red-throated Diver sometimes being content with a mere hollow on the shore. Each species lays two eggs, olive-brown in ground colour, spotted with dark brown. The Black-throated Diver's are the darkest and least profusely spotted. When the young are reared the birds begin to wander, and during winter especially, visit our southern waters, becoming much more oceanic in their habits. These two birds are readily distinguished in breeding plumage by the respective colours of the throat, being purplish black in the one, and reddish chestnut in the other, as the English names imply.

West and
North
Scotland.

West and
North
Scotland.

We will now betake ourselves to southern waters, more accessible to the observer, where we shall not fail to find birds, if not so rare,

yet quite as interesting and much more widely dispersed.

Widely
distributed.
Rare east of
W. longi-
tude $1\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$.

On most streams sufficiently swift-flowing and rocky of bed the DIPPER (*Cinclus aquaticus*) is sure to be met with. He loves the stream where it flows the quickest, where its waters are troubled and toss in mad career, foam-flecked and noisy, over the moss-grown boulders; the dark, deep pools below the falls, where the spotted trout and grayling lurk, and where the shrews, the rats, and the otters have their habitation. These are the haunts most favoured by the Dipper. You cannot possibly mistake him for any other species. His brown upper plumage, white throat, and rufous breast, together with the habit of plunging head-long into the stream at intervals, are quite enough to unfailingly proclaim his identity. Summer and winter alike he dwells by the stream, and in spring his short glad song sounds fitfully amidst the roar, and the gurgle, and the babble of the never-silent waters. It will be remarked by the careful observer that each particular pair of Dippers seem to hold a vested right in certain lengths of the stream, which they are prone to guard from encroachment. This pretty bird is almost as active as a Wren, for ever skipping and flying about; now on the land or the water-girdled rocks, anon in the stream itself, where he is as much at home as the fish themselves, coming to the surface at intervals for breath. Indeed, much of his insect food is obtained amongst the stones and sand, moss and pebbles at the bottom of the stream. He flies low, yet quickly, following the windings of the stream, and often utters a low, feeble chirp just as he rises into the air. In addi-

tion to insects, he will also eat worms and grubs, and even small fry. The Dipper breeds early, commencing its nest in a favourable season during the first week in April. Its nest is one of the most beautiful examples of bird architecture known—a spherical structure, like that of the Wren, made externally of the greenest moss, and lined with dry grass and leaves. This wondrous nest is wedged in some crevice of the wet rocks, or under the bank of the stream, amongst the exposed roots of trees. Here, in many instances, the humidity of the situation preserves the outer portion of the nest from withering, and we might easily pass it by as an unusually fine cluster of greenest moss! The tell-tale hole at the side, near the top, betrays the secret, however, and by inserting a couple of fingers we may take out the four or five shining white eggs and examine them.

Upon many of these same streams the KING-
FISHER (*Alcedo ispida*) may be met with; indeed, he is even far more widely dispersed, and has his residence on streams and rivers that are much too sluggish for the Dipper. He frequents the drains and sluices, too, and even the lakes and pools. I have also known him to take up his quarters near the smallest of ponds in private grounds, and rear his young beside them. The gorgeous cobalt-blue and green and chestnut of the Kingfisher enable us to recognise him, no matter however fleeting may be our glimpse of him as he glides arrow-like over the water, often uttering his plaintive *seep-seep* as he goes. I know of few prettier sights than that of a Kingfisher seeking his food. Only the other day I was wandering along the wooded banks of a Surrey streamlet, and I stood

Widely
distributed.

to rest a moment on a rough beam which does duty for a foot-bridge. Almost directly a Kingfisher flew along the stream towards me, and dropped upon the long bare branch of a sycamore which grew above a pool. How brightly his plumage shone in the gloom of the arching branches, how sharply defined his reflection in the still, clear water! Soon he dropped with a splash into the stream, and the minnow he had caught struggled for its life as the bird flew away down-stream with his victim. Three times was this operation repeated from the self-same branch within half an hour, and then, his appetite apparently satisfied, he flew under the bridge on which I was standing away up the stream, and I saw him no more. It is such little incidents as these that endow Ornithology with its greatest charm. The Kingfisher is a resident in our islands, but the naturalist will note that its numbers are increased in autumn by birds from more northern latitudes. Small fish and various insects and mollusks inhabiting the water are the food of this species. Kingfishers pair for life, and return year by year to the old nesting-place. This is in a hole in the banks of the stream, either one made by the birds themselves or the old burrow of a rat. At the end of this tunnel the eggs are laid on a platform of fish-bones, often surrounded by a mass of putrid fish. From such a filthy hole we should scarcely expect to take eight such spotless, glossy white eggs (they are a delicate pink before blowing), but such is the case, although how they escape becoming as dirty as the eggs of the Gannet or the Grebe is a mystery.

Two species of Warbler are also closely

associated with the waterside. The most aquatic of these is the REED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus streperus*), although it is not so universally distributed. Both are migrants, arriving in this country about the middle of April, but of the two the SEDGE WARBLER (*A. phragmitis*) is perhaps a little the earlier. Although both love an aquatic haunt, there is considerable difference between the localities frequented by each. The Reed Warbler, as his name implies, is by choice a dweller in the reeds and willows; the Sedge Warbler frequents the tangled underwood by the waterside and the swampy thickets in the spinneys. The narrow reed-choked dykes of our southern and eastern counties are the Reed Bird's paradise. Here, among the tall green stems and streaming leaves, he lives in that seclusion his retiring nature loves; here, from morn till even, and at intervals during the night, he sings his rambling song as he clings to the reeds; and we often obtain fleeting glimpses of him as he hops from stalk to stalk with marvellous speed through the dense cover, or flits across the water-ways, or flutters into the air above his haunt to drop down again at once into its verdant shelter. Nests of this bird are common enough among the reeds and willows during the month of June. It is a curious and wonderful cradle, this nest of the Reed Warbler, suspended over the water between the willow twigs, or supported by three or four of the green reeds. It is made of dry grass-stalks and withered leaves of the reeds, sometimes a little moss, and lined with fine rootlets. The eggs are four or five in number, very pale blue in ground colour,

South of
Tees. East
of W. longi-
tude $2\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$.

Widely
distributed.

spotted and blotched with olive-brown and gray. The parent birds become very noisy when their haunts are invaded, and their scolding notes are uttered as they flit from reed to reed all anxious for the safety of their home. The food of this species and of the Sedge Warbler is almost exclusively composed of the insects of the water-side and their larvæ. These two birds somewhat closely resemble each other, but the Sedge Warbler is russet-brown above, the feathers with dark centres, the pale buff eyestripe is very clearly defined, and the underparts are buffish white; the Reed Warbler is more olive on the upper parts, the feathers having no dark centres, the underparts are more inclined to buff, and the eyestripe is nearly obsolete.

The voice of the Sedge Warbler is often heard from the thickets at nightfall, and only too often his melody is ascribed to a much sweeter singer, namely, the Nightingale. He is a most persistent singer; indeed, all of these riverside Warblers are, and the least provocation is enough to send him into loudest song. The Sedge Warbler is shy and retiring in his habits, far more often heard than seen, and the peeps we do get of his little brown form are transitory and uncertain. Far more frequently his harsh call-note of *turr-turr* is the only indication of his presence, or mayhap the gentle trembling of the twigs in the densest part of the thicket. The nest of this bird may also be sought with success in early June. It is made among the tangled vegetation, often as much as ten feet or more from the ground; dry grass and the dead leaves of aquatic plants form the outer

portion, finer grass and often a few hairs complete the lining. The four or five eggs are dirty white in ground colour, thickly mottled with yellowish brown, and occasionally with a few hair-like scratches of dark brown. Few nests are so simple as the Sedge Bird's. Both these birds begin their southern migration in September; but as they are of such skulking habits, and are then almost silent, it is often difficult to state the exact time of their departure.

The dainty little PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla yarrellii*) is another bird we are sure to meet with by the waterside, summer and winter alike, although, be it remarked, this species is often met with far from the pond or stream, on the open fallows, especially in spring. It is very fond of frequenting the streams and rivers that flow through the meadows, and is often met with by the side of the cattle-pond in the pastures. You cannot well mistake him in his black and white dress as he runs daintily about the bank, or trips to and fro among the feeding cattle and horses, beating his tail rapidly up and down, and taking little flights before us as we advance, uttering his cheery *chiz-zit* as he rises, and oft repeating it at every dip of his undulatory course. Many Pied Wagtails appear to leave this country in autumn, especially from the more northern districts, and return in spring; at both seasons they may be seen in parties, and during the winter in most localities they are perceptibly rarer than in summer. The Pied Wagtail possesses a sweet and varied song, but its drawbacks are its shortness and the fitfulness of its utterance. Sometimes during spring we

Widely
distributed

see the cock-birds rise into the air for a little way and warble their song, or even whilst sitting on a stone or in the branches of trees they may be heard to do so. Small worms, insects and their larvæ, and tiny seeds, are the Pied Wag-tail's food. The nest of this bird is made in a variety of situations, although always on the ground, or in crevices of walls and rocks, never in the branches. A favourite place is under a stone, in a dry drain-pipe, or beneath a tile in the brick-fields. The nest is made of dry grass, moss, and rootlets, and lined with hair, wool, and feathers. The eggs are four or five, very pale blue in ground colour, speckled and spotted with different shades of grayish brown. The Cuckoo often selects the nest of this bird in which to place her alien egg. The young are fed for some time after leaving the nest, generally doing so before they are able to fly. This habit of tending the young after they have left the nest is peculiar to all the species usually selected by the Cuckoo, which is a wise proceeding on the part of that species, for were the foster parents in the habit of abandoning their young at once, the young Cuckoo would invariably be left to starve.

Widely
distributed.

By the side of the slowly flowing streams, and on the banks of canals and ponds, the REED BUNTING (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), also has its residence. You may identify him by his black head and throat, white cheeks and collar, and chestnut and black upper parts. The female is not so conspicuous, wanting the black head and throat and white collar, these parts being reddish brown. Like the Pied Wagtail this bird may often be

met with at a considerable distance from water, especially in winter ; but swampy ground is preferred. Very often this pretty bird will first be seen, especially in spring, clinging to some reed or twig overhanging the water, and at this season you may hear his monotonous song. This sounds something like *see-sa, see-sa, see-sa-sur-rr-r* ; whilst the call-note is a prolonged *seese*. As you approach the bird takes wing, and in undulatory flight hastens along the waterside to another perch again to await your advance, and then again to flit onwards. Again and again he flies away and alights ; again you disturb him ; until perchance he doubles over the water and returns to his old haunt. His nest is made on the bank by the waterside, sometimes in a cluster of rushes on the marshy ground or beneath a sheltering bush. It is made of dry grass and bits of withered aquatic herbage, lined with fine roots and a little horsehair. The four or five eggs are dirty white or grayish olive in ground colour, streaked and spotted with purplish brown and gray. These markings are nothing near so tangled or profuse as those on the eggs of the Yellow Bunting. During summer the Reed Bunting feeds almost exclusively on insects and larvæ ; but in autumn and winter it becomes a seed-eater ; and it is in search of this fare, especially during hard weather, that we meet with the bird away from the waterside, on the stubbles and weedy pastures, on the highways, and even in the farmyards.

Whilst studying bird life by the waterside we cannot help noticing the Swallow, the Martins, and the Swift, which flock above the pool and

chase their insect prey to and fro round the banks. There is something specially interesting about these birds at the waterside during the late autumn days. Many of these rivers and pools are chosen gathering-places, sanctioned by custom, where for years uncounted these little fleet-winged hosts have been wont to congregate and spend the last few days of their residence with us ere speeding south. The air is thronged with happy fluttering birds, coursing through the air in all directions—high up towards the clouds and low down just above the water's surface; in mid-air or like specks against the distant blue. Here, there, and everywhere, Swallows and Martins mixed indiscriminately together; but the latter species generally preponderating. All are waiting for the hour of departure; the old birds as eager now to leave us and approaching winter behind them, as they were to reach our country in the spring; the young, perhaps, filled with wondering curiosity at the unusual gathering.

Widely
distributed.

The most aquatic of the Swallows is the SAND MARTIN (*Cotile riparia*), distinguished from the rest of its kindred by its brown and sombre upper plumage. It therefore deserves a more detailed notice in the present chapter, but the other species we have already dealt with elsewhere (see pp. 17, 18). The Sand Martin, as its name implies, is a bird of the sand, making its nest in earth cliffs; and wherever a suitable bank is to be found near the waterside a colony of these interesting little creatures will almost invariably be met with. Not that they always establish their colony by the waterside, for many favoured places are far from the pool, notably in

railway cuttings, quarries, and sand-pits. The Sand Martin is the first Swallow to arrive, usually making its appearance in Yorkshire by the middle of April, and the old haunts are frequented season after season. Nesting duties begin in May. Each pair has its burrow in the sandy cliff, which is made by the birds themselves scratching out the loose soil for a depth of two or three feet. At the end of this gallery a slight nest of dry grass and feathers is loosely and carelessly arranged, in which the four or five pure white eggs are laid. The scene at a Sand Martin colony is busy and animated in the extreme. All day long the little brown birds are fluttering to and fro, entering and leaving their nests, burrowing their tunnels, or feeding their young. Insects are their only food.

Two other birds of the fresh waters may here be aptly noticed. First of these is the MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*). Provided there is but a small amount of seclusion and privacy, the Moorhen or Waterhen is almost sure to be met with. It is not a very fastidious bird, and will take up its residence even on the pools of stagnant water below railway embankments, on weed-grown fish-ponds, on mill-dams, and on rivers wherever there are still flowing reaches and quiet corners. Its dark greenish brown upper plumage, white longest under tail-coverts, white striped flanks, and crimson forehead are marks of distinction easily noted by the most superficial glance. The Moorhen is as much at home in the water as on the land. It swims and dives with ease; walks and runs well; and hops about the branches and perches in them as skilfully as the true perching

Widely
distributed.

birds. The Moorhen is resident in this country, and remains in its accustomed haunts as long as they are free from ice. This bird swims with a peculiar bobbing motion of the head ; and whilst walking about the land it frequently flicks its short tail. Its note is a peculiarly grating cry, something like the word *kick* pronounced in several syllables. This note is often heard as the bird flies to and fro in the darkness of night. The Moorhen feeds on worms, snails, small fish, and various kinds of insects and their larvæ, as well as on the tender shoots and seeds of aquatic plants. This bird is rather an early breeder, in many districts its eggs being laid by the middle of April. In the love season it is a somewhat pugnacious bird, and two rival males may sometimes be observed in conflict. I once observed two males fighting, the females quietly looking on in the background. They raised their wings over their back till the tips of the primaries were almost directly above the head, and fought with their beaks with great pertinacity, all the time uttering a series of sharp but tremulous clicking notes. The nest of this bird is usually made amongst the flags and rushes by the waterside, often several yards from shore. It is a bulky pile of dead flags and rushes and leaves, and lined with fine grass or dry rush and leaves of aquatic vegetation. The eggs are from six to twelve in number, reddish white in ground colour, somewhat sparingly blotched and spotted with brownish red and gray. The female sits closely, and generally with head to wind ; but she is always careful to cover her eggs, which she does remarkably

quickly, before slipping off into the water or rushes. I have often noticed this bird return to her nest on the wing, poising above it with rapidly beating pinions until she has finally settled down over her eggs. The downy black chicks take to the water at once, where they swim and dive almost as well as their parents.

In very similar situations to those frequented by the Moorhen we may also find the COOT (*Fulica atra*), a much bigger and darker-looking bird, with a very conspicuous white frontal shield. Its habits are much the same as those of the preceding species, and it makes a similar nest; but the eggs, from six to twelve, are very pale buff in ground colour, speckled and dusted with dark blackish brown and gray. The Coot feeds much on grass, and may often be seen in the meadows near its watery haunts grazing just like a Goose. Like the Moorhen this bird is an accomplished swimmer and diver, but its feet are lobed. In autumn and winter Coots often assemble into large flocks, congregating in certain favoured spots near the low-lying eastern coasts, on the Broads; but it is probable that many of these birds are migrants. The Coot is also more of a marine bird in winter than the Moorhen, and at all times is more of a feeder on fish than that species. Its loud clear note of *K'ō* oft repeated is very characteristic.

Widely but
more locally
distributed
than
preceding
species.

From the Moorhen and the Coot it is an easy step to the Grebes. Two species of these birds breed in our islands, but by far the commoner and more widely distributed is the LITTLE GREBE (*Podiceps minor*). It is found on many sheets of

Widely
distributed.

water in company with the Moorhen, although it is not so generally dispersed. The province of the Little Grebe—in fact, of all the Grebes—is *par excellence* the water. It may be said to pass most of its waking hours therein; and consequently is skilful beyond description in the art of swimming and diving. The Little Grebe is readily distinguished from the other Grebes by its small size, and from all other birds by its peculiar satin-like plumage and lobed feet. It is a restless little creature enough, swimming to and fro, and every now and then darting beneath the surface in the twinkling of an eye, reappearing again in a few moments with the water rolling off its compact plumage in silver beads. Although its legs are placed so far backwards, it is able to run about the land with considerable dexterity, and makes its way through the tangled aquatic vegetation with surprising speed. Like the Moorhen it is closely attached to its haunt, never wandering far away unless driven out by continued frost. At such times these birds make towards the coast, where in the brackish backwaters, drains, and broads they can find sufficient food. Their numbers are also increased in winter by birds from more northern lands. The note of this engaging bird is a shrill *weet* or *tweet*. The Little Grebe makes its bulky nest among the flags and rushes, often some distance from shore, early in the spring. This is a mass of aquatic rubbish piled together into a conical heap, at the top of which a hollow is formed and lined with finer and drier materials. In this, about the end of April, the hen-bird lays four or five eggs,

pointed oval in shape, and pale bluish white in colour, although they soon become stained and discoloured by the wet feet of the sitting bird, and by the damp materials with which they are covered every time she leaves them. As soon as the chicks are hatched they take to the water; and in some cases as many as three broods are reared in succession.

The Great Crested Grebe is a much more local species, and prefers larger sheets of water, especially the Broads; and as we have devoted a ramble specially to the bird life of that district we will reserve our observations until then (see p. 197). At least seven species of Ducks, in addition to the Mallard, breed sparingly near our inland waters. Five of them belong to the non-diving Ducks. Of the former the PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) breeds sparingly in Ireland (eggs seven to ten, buffish green); the WIGEON (*A. penelope*), as locally in the Highlands (eggs seven to twelve, buffish white); the GARGANEY (*A. circia*) in one of our eastern English counties (eggs eight to twelve, yellowish white). The SHOVELLER (*A. clypeata*) (eggs six to ten, buffish white), and the TEAL (*A. crecca*) (eggs eight to ten, cream colour, sometimes tinged with green), are more widely dispersed, wherever there are haunts suitable and secluded enough for their requirements. Of the latter or diving Ducks, the POCHARD (*Fuligula ferina*) (eggs eight to twelve, pale brownish green), and the TUFTED DUCK (*F. cristata*) (eggs like preceding in number and colour, only trifle smaller), both breed locally in quiet districts where they are protected. In their nesting economy

all these birds very closely resemble the Mallard, and as our space is limited, a detailed description is unnecessary.

Whilst by the waterside we may often watch the Heron at his piscatorial labours. We have already seen him at home among the trees; he comes hither for the purpose of feeding. A Heron standing in the shallows or on the banks is always a picturesque addition to the scene. Silent and still as though carved in stone he stands, his bright yellow eye intently fixed upon the water, neck drawn into an S-like curve, and long spear-shaped beak ready to dart down and impale any fish or frog that may be unwary enough to come within reach. Like all fishers he is the very soul of patience, and hour after hour he watches and watches, and waits and waits for his prey. When gorged with food you may see him rise slowly above the rushes and the trees and wing his way homewards to the accustomed roost. He comes with great regularity to certain fishing stations, often flying considerable distances to do so. There are many other birds to be noticed by the waterside, especially in the trees by the stream in autumn and winter. The alders are often thronged with REDPOLES, with TITMICE, and more interesting still, with SISKINS. This latter little bird quits its northern forests for the winter, and wanders far and wide in quest of food. Then may we see it by the southern streams, hopping about the alders in ever-changing attitudes, flying from tree to tree in a merry, noisy, restless party, regaling itself on the tiny seeds. Then to the waterside come a great variety of birds to wash and to preen

themselves, and in hard weather the banks of these open waters are the last refuge of a multitude of others.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Gray Wagtail .	Resident	Shrill <i>chiz-zit</i>	Slate-gray and green above, yellow below, throat black in male
Pied Flycatcher	April to September	Oft-repeated double note	Black above, white below, wings and tail black and white
Common Sand-piper . . .	April to September	Plaintive <i>weet</i>	Greenish brown above, white below, wings with white bar across
Red-necked Phalarope .	May to August	Low <i>weet</i>	Slate-gray and chestnut above, white below
Osprey . .	April & October	Oft-repeated <i>kai</i> ; alarm-note, harsh scream	Head white streaked with brown, above dark brown shot with purple, below white banded with brown across breast
Red-throated Diver . . .	Resident	Oft-repeated <i>ak</i> ; unearthly screams at breeding-grounds	Brownish black above, white below, lower throat chestnut
Black-throated Diver . . .	Resident	Oft-repeated <i>ak</i> ; unearthly screams at breeding-grounds	Black shot with purple above, square-shaped white spots on scapulars and back, white below, lower throat purplish black
Dipper . . .	Resident	Low double <i>chit</i>	Slate-gray above, chin to breast white, remainder chestnut-brown
Kingfisher . .	Resident	Plaintive <i>seep</i>	Above greenish and clear cobalt-blue, below rich chestnut
Reed Warbler .	April to September and October	Harsh <i>turr</i>	Olive-brown with rufous tinge above, buff and white below
Sedge Warbler	April to September and October	Harsh <i>turr</i>	Russet-brown above, feathers with dark centres, eyestripe and underparts buffish white
Pied Wagtail .	Partial Migrant	Shrill <i>chiz-zit</i>	Black and white

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Reed Bunting .	Resident	Prolonged <i>seese</i>	Chestnut and black above, collar and underparts white, throat black
Sand Martin .	April to September and October	Harsh <i>ret</i>	Upper parts and chest mouse-brown, remainder of underparts white
Moorhen . .	Resident	Harsh <i>kick</i>	Greenish brown above, slate-gray below
Coot	Resident	Loud <i>kō</i>	Slate-gray, darkest on head and neck, white wing-bar
Little Grebe .	Resident	Shrill <i>weet</i>	Dark brown above, throat, cheeks, and fore-neck chestnut, remainder of underparts rusty black, secondaries brown and white



RAMBLE VII.

ON THE MOORS, THE COMMONS, AND THE HEATHS.

ONCE more the birds of our rambles change with the change of scene. The wild and lonely moors, those vast tracts of heather and bilberry, mingled with bogs, half concealed by cotton-grass and rushes, and studded with still, deep pools of clear peat-dyed water, and broken into ridges and edges of bare rocks and boulder-strewn hillsides, are the chosen haunts of birds we may never meet elsewhere. These moors are almost as little changed as the mountains. They are too rugged and too poor of soil to repay the agriculturist for reclaiming them ; too bleak, too inaccessible, and too far removed from centres of industry to tempt even the most daring of speculative builders to advertise them as eligible sites for modern residences—and so they have been left in peace through half a century of revolution and improvement, and thus the wild birds that dwell upon their broad acres are still in undisturbed possession of their ancient strongholds, and bid fair long to remain so. Perhaps even their breezy wastes may ultimately succumb to the modern spirit of democracy

now abroad amongst us ; and we may even yet live to see them parcelled out into allotments for a working man's Arcadia, if the party cry of "three acres and a cow" be started once more in earnest by ousted politicians thirsting for plunder, place, and power, and eager to climb thereto upon the shoulders of their easily duped constituents, or at the cost of wrecking institutions that are a Briton's pride the wide world over. But birds and politics ill agree, and we trust the moorlands may never become the arena of party warfare, and may long be free from aught but their feathered inhabitants. With this expression of opinion we will make our way upon them in quest of ornithological knowledge.

The most characteristic bird of the moors is the RED GROUSE (*Tetrao scoticus*). He is the one bird we are sure of meeting upon their brown wastes, no matter what the time or season we choose to walk across them. He is by no means easily overlooked ; for he stands conspicuously enough upon the big boulders of millstone grit, or even on the copings of the dry walls that separate the moors from the highway and the rough upland pastures. Then he rises from our feet with a soul-stirring whirr of wing and a startling cry of *go-bac, bac-bac-bac*, and flies across the heather or skims over the shoulder of the hill to find that solitude his soul best loves. Summer or winter he is just the same—the one bird that is inseparably associated with the heather. We Britishers should feel proud of him ; for small as our islands are, he may only be met with on their moorland wastes ; he is peculiar to our country—our one national bird, the island repre-

Widely
distributed.
Except S. or
E. of line
drawn from
Hull to
Bristol.

sentative of the widely ranging Willow Grouse (*T. albus*). Although highly prized as a bird of sport, the Red Grouse is, with the sole exception of the Ptarmigan, the least dependent upon man's protection for existence. Indeed, it is more than probable that man's efforts to preserve and breed it for the sport it yields, in many cases end in failure; and the periodical visitations of "Grouse disease" that ravage and depopulate miles of moorland, are largely due to his meddlesome interference with the Moorfowl's economy. The Red Grouse is monogamous, pairing in early spring, when the packs or flocks disperse themselves for the duties of the year. Even in the breeding season, however, the bird is far from being unsociable, and all the summer through may be observed more or less gregarious. According to the season and the locality, the hen-bird goes to nest from the early part of April to the end of May, making a scanty home on the drier parts of the moor by preference, under the shelter of a heather-bush or amongst the tall ling. Here she lays from eight to twelve very handsome eggs, white in ground colour where it can be seen, but thickly mottled and spotted over most of the surface with rich purplish brown. Their beauty, however, is easily destroyed; for the colouring matter is readily washed off, when they are fresh especially; and very often the wet feet and plumage of the brooding hen disfigure them much. The brown plumage of the Grouse is remarkably protective amongst the brown heath, and the sitting bird remains upon her home until almost trodden upon before she will leave it. Although, strictly speaking, a ground bird, the Red Grouse

occasionally perches in trees wherever such are growing in its haunts. The buds and tender shoots of the all-prevailing heath are the favourite food of the Red Grouse; and this fare is varied in summer by insects and grubs, and in autumn by the various ground fruits that flourish on the moors, as well as seeds.

Widely
distributed.
Rarer south
of Derby-
shire.

Almost as closely associated with the heather as the Red Grouse is the RING OUSEL (*Merula torquata*). I always fancy that there is a stalwart independence about these birds of the heather unknown in any other species, which they take every opportunity of asserting in the face of a human intruder. Perhaps it is the long residence in a district of such utter freedom; perhaps it is the scant acquaintanceship they have with man. Anyway, both the Red Grouse and the Ring Ousel always appear to challenge our right upon the moor, and by their noisy cries, half of alarm and half of defiance, seek to drive us from their lonely haunt. The Ring Ousel is readily identified. He is about the size of a Blackbird, and somewhat similar in colour, only across the chest is a broad white crescent which makes him very conspicuous as he sits on the rocks or on the stunted bushes, watching us intently. Then his noisy cry of *tac-tac-tac, tac-tac-tac*, is most persistent. He is a summer migrant to the moors, appearing to journey in parties which after a few days disperse over the surrounding country. As a songster the Ring Ousel does not figure very prominently; but bird music is scarce on these brown wastes, and his monotonous, short, and oft-repeated song helps to enliven the moors. In its nesting economy the Ring Ousel is very like

the Blackbird. It builds the same bulky kind of nest, placing it in some bush on the wild banks of the mountain stream, among the heather branches, or even on the ground at the top of a bank. Here the female lays her four or five eggs, which cannot safely be distinguished from those of the Blackbird. The only way to be sure of them is to see the parents; and there is little difficulty in doing this, for of all birds they are perhaps the most clamorous and intrusive when their nest is approached. They seem to discard all personal safety, and fly round and round and perch on the rocks and bushes near, all the time uttering harsh cries. Even for their unfinished nest they show an affection perhaps only equalled by the Chaffinch. The food of the Ring Ousel is chiefly composed of worms, snails, and beetles; but in the late summer and early autumn the bird feasts on the mountain berries, even at this season visiting gardens near its haunts to pilfer peas, cherries, and other fruits. By the middle of September many Ring Ousels have already begun to move south, and the migration lasts about a month, being much more leisurely performed than in spring.

There are two other Passerine birds that are dwellers on the moors, and which we are almost certain of meeting with any time during the summer months. The first of these is the TWITE (*Fringilla flavirostris*), a bird very closely allied to the Linnet. Although the Twite does not leave our islands, its migrations are remarkably regular. Its home and breeding-place is on the moors; but its winter refuge is the lower ground, and during that season it may be met with in

Widely
distributed.

most agricultural districts. It is distinguished by having a yellow bill, and no ruby-coloured patch on the head and breast. Without noticing such structural peculiarities the Twite is easily enough recognised by its long-drawn note, *twa-ite*. Like the Cuckoo, it is constantly calling its own name and rendering mistakes on our side almost impossible. The Twite is usually first seen sitting on the tall heather, and as we approach he flits on and perches again to wait for us. On and on he flits, or rises into the air and returns to his old perching-place, where perhaps he will be rejoined with his mate, she in the meantime having slipped off her cosy nest amongst the heath, and together the birds flit anxiously about the moor, patiently awaiting our departure. But before doing so we will take just one peep into their little home. It is often made right down near the roots of the heath, often on the very ground itself, and is made of dry grass, fine twigs of the heather, moss, and rootlets, and warmly lined with wool and feathers. The eggs are four or five in number, pale greenish blue, spotted with dark brown and gray, most thickly round the larger end. The food of the Twite up here on the moors is composed of insects, especially little beetles; but when we meet with this bird again on the lowlands in winter we shall find that small seeds are almost its sole support. As soon as the young are safely reared the Twite becomes gregarious, and for the remainder of the year is met with in flocks of varying size, and often in the company of other Finches, especially Linnets and Redpoles.

Our second moorland Passere is the MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*), although "Moor" Pipit is by far the better term. In its annual movements the Meadow Pipit is very similar to the Twite. It is only in summer that the moorlands are frequented by this bird; at the approach of winter it seeks more sheltered districts, and at that season is a well-known species upon the fields and manure-heaps. On the moors the Meadow Pipit is easily recognised by its olive-green upper parts, nearly white underparts, streaked with brown on the neck, breast, and flanks, and by its plaintive cry of *peep-peep*. It is most abundant in the wettest parts of the moors, and in some swampy localities may be flushed almost every few yards. The Meadow Pipit is a most industrious singer, rising ever and anon into the air, and uttering a short and feeble but sweet little song as he descends. Soon after arriving on these upland wastes the Meadow Pipit begins to breed. Its simple little nest is built on the ground, often on a bank, sometimes under a flat stone, and occasionally in a tuft of rushes or coarse grass absolutely surrounded by water. It is made of the moss growing so plentifully around, coarse dry grass, and lined with finer grass, a few hairs and fibrous roots. The four or five eggs are white in ground colour—though as a rule little of this is ever visible—clouded and spotted all over with brown, and sometimes streaked with very dark brown on the larger end. Little variation is to be observed in the eggs of this bird. After the young are reared the Meadow Pipit becomes gregarious, especially so during the

Widely
distributed

autumn, and then they quit the moors for the turnip-fields and wet pastures. As the winter draws on, however, they become less social, and during that season are often met with alone. With spring a transient gregarious habit will be observed just before the breeding season commences. Meadow Pipits live largely on insects, worms, and snails in summer, but in autumn and winter small seeds and even grain are eaten in addition to this usual fare.

Widely
distributed.

Wherever the Meadow Pipit is common on the moorlands, the Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) is generally the same. In the bright genial spring-time the gladsome notes of the Cuckoo are heard everywhere on the borders of the moors, and even, but less frequently, far on their wide wastes. Caterpillars are abundant among the heather and coarse vegetation of the moors, and foster parents for its offspring abound in the Meadow Pipits. Probably ninety per cent. of the Cuckoos hatched on the moorlands are incubated by Meadow Pipits; and it is a common sight to see this little bird feeding a clamouring young Cuckoo as it sits on a rock or wall, or even on a gate-post. The Cuckoo usually arrives on the moors about the third week in April, a little later than his first appearance further south. He soon commences to sing, and continues in splendid voice until the middle of June; then his song becomes more laboured and more fitful, and by the early days of July he has ceased to utter it at all. The Cuckoo is easily observed on the moors; there is little cover here in which he can hide, and time after time we see the long-tailed bird flying about amongst the rocks and heath, and are startled by

his full, clear notes. Heard at close quarters, there is something very startling about this note—a deep and hollow sound which seems to vibrate the air around us, and which may be heard a mile or more across the waste. The Cuckoo flies well and powerfully, but is a clumsy bird on the ground, and uses its short legs little as a means of locomotion. It is very fond of sitting on a bare dead branch, and rocking itself to and fro, raising and depressing its outspread tail and frequently uttering a hoarse chatter. The eggs of the Cuckoo are laid in May, and though subject to considerable variation, the type usually found on the moors is very similar to that of the Skylark and about the same size. The number of eggs laid by a female Cuckoo every season is yet an unsolved problem, but four or five are very probably deposited, each one almost invariably in a different nest.

One of the most interesting of the birds of prey has its home upon the moors in summer. This is the MERLIN (*Falco æsalon*). Its breeding range is almost the same as that of the Red Grouse and the Twite, commencing on the moors of the Peak in Derbyshire, and thence extending northwards with the heather and the hills. Early in April the Merlin leaves the lowlands and makes its appearance on the moors. There are several very interesting facts in the economy of this brilliant and daring little Falcon. One of these is its persistent attachment to a certain haunt, returning year by year (for be it known the Merlin shifts its ground with the change of season, just like the Twite) to one particular place to breed, in spite of continued persecution.

Moors of
Great
Britain,
north of
Derbyshire,
and Irish
moors.

This applies not only to an individual pair, but to all the Merlins of our moors; for if a pair be exterminated one season, their place is almost invariably taken by others the next, which build on the same identical patch of heather that was lately occupied by their unfortunate companions. The Merlin makes its slight nest on the ground amongst the heather and other vegetation of the moor, the female laying four or five eggs very like those of the Kestrel, only not quite so pink a brown. The Merlin feeds upon the various small birds of the moor; and it will fly down Plovers, Snipes, and the half-grown Grouse, as well as capture the larger coleopterous insects. From the Kestrel, the only other Hawk with which it is likely to be confused, the Merlin is readily distinguished by its smaller size and slate-blue upper plumage. Both Kestrels and Sparrow-Hawks occasionally visit the moors, the former even breeding on the rocks upon them; but the ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD (*Aquila lagopus*) regularly crosses them in spring and autumn on passage to its arctic breeding-grounds. Its stay, however, is so fleeting that the observer will be more than fortunate to come across this species, readily distinguished from the Common Buzzard by its feathered tarsi. The Short-eared Owl may also be met with in most parts of the moors, but we shall meet with this bird on the Broads, and will then study its habits (see p. 188).

In many parts of the moors, in the swampy hollows or on the very summits of the hills where the ground is rough and broken, stretching away for miles in billowy wastes of heath and cranberry, enlivened here and there with patches of green

rushes and cotton-grass, and pools of clear water or dancing streams which have eaten a course deep through the black peaty soil, we may meet with the GOLDEN PLOVER (*Charadrius plumialis*), recognised by his yellow speckled upper plumage and black belly, and by his flute-like whistle of *klee-wee*. Like most of the birds that are found upon the moors the Golden Plover is only a summer visitor to them, and quits them in autumn for a more lowland haunt. Upon their first arrival here they are observed in flocks, but a week or so later they have separated into pairs, and have become much more tame and trustful. Very pretty they look as they run along the ridges or stand poised upon the hillocks. If alarmed they rise into the air with noisy cries and fly to and fro on powerful wing; yet they never indulge in those erratic aerial movements so common with the Lapwing. Golden Plovers breed in May, making a slight nest under the sheltering shield of a grass or rush tuft, and laying four beautiful eggs, buff in ground colour, blotched and spotted, especially on the larger end with rich dark brown, and sparingly with gray. As soon as the young are reared they and their parents gather into flocks, and eventually all wing their way from the moors to the coasts. Beetles and worms, together with seeds, buds and shoots of plants form their food on the moors; but when on the coast their diet is almost exclusively composed of animal substances. It should be remarked that after the autumn moult the black underparts become white.

Two or three other wading birds are also inhabitants of the moors in summer. The first we will glance at is the CURLEW (*Numenius*

Widely distributed. Rare south of Derbyshire.

Widely distributed. Rare south of Wales.

arquatus). Here, as everywhere, the Curlew is the essence of wariness, and the moment we step upon their lonely haunt the watchful birds rise one by one, and soon the entire moor is in commotion and the air resounds with their characteristic notes—*curlee, curl-ee, curr-lee*, now near and distinct, anon faint and low, as the long-billed birds fly backwards and forwards above the swampy ground. Their slight nests are here amongst the rank vegetation of the wilderness. By the middle or end of April these contain eggs. These nests are usually under the shelter of a tuft of herbage, and the number of eggs is four. They are pear-shaped, olive-green in colour, spotted and blotched with greenish brown and gray, and occasionally streaked with darker brown—tints that help to conceal them from view by harmonising with the ground on which they rest. After the young are safely reared the Curlews begin to flock and soon seek the coasts. Worms, insects, and various mountain fruits are the Curlew's food in summer; but in winter, when the bird lives upon the mud-flats and low-lying shores, sand-worms, crustaceans, and even grass are eaten. The long bill, brown mottled upper parts, white rump, and nearly white underparts serve to distinguish the Curlew. The mottled and barred brown and white wings and tail are very noteworthy during flight.

Widely
distributed.

Our second species is the COMMON SNIPE (*Scolopax gallinago*). Almost every one is familiar with this long-billed bird, dressed in brown and white garb, striped on the back with yellow; yet there are comparatively few who have made its acquaintance on the moors and seen its nest.

The Snipe frequents the swampy parts of the moor, and in April the male is famous for his aërial flights. He may then be seen soaring high up in the air and careering about in widening circles as he goes; then, when the zenith of his flight is reached, he descends to the earth on vibrating wings and expanded tail, making the famous noise which is known to every countryman as "bleating." How this noise is produced—whether by the vocal organs, or by the air passing through the tail feathers, or by the vibrating wings—is still a matter of conjecture. These extraordinary flights are confined to the love season, and we may judge from them when his nest is ready for inspection. This is made among the heather, sometimes a considerable distance from the swamps, but more frequently it will be found among the rush tufts and the cotton-grass. It is a simple hollow lined with a few scraps of dead herbage. The eggs are four in number, pear-shaped, and olive-green, boldly and beautifully blotched with dark brown, lighter brown, and gray, and sometimes streaked with nearly black. Insects and worms found in the swampy ground are the Snipe's favourite food. This bird is remarkably skulking in its habits, rarely seen on the wing except in the love season, or when flushed, and is most active at nightfall. So long as the swamps are not frost-bound the Snipes linger on the moors. I have known them do so right through the winter; but in severe weather they are compelled to wander to more lowland haunts where food can be obtained. Their journeys are always made at night.

Widely
distributed.
In England
chiefly in
Lake
districts
during
summer.

Our last species is the DUNLIN (*Tringa alpina*), a bird that also visits the northern moors to breed, leaving the coast where it has lived during the winter in flocks, and separating over these higher grounds in pairs. Its breeding season is in May, the eggs being laid towards the end of that month. It will be remarked that the Dunlin is much handsomer in spring than in winter plumage, much of its upper parts being chestnut and black, and the white lower parts have become nearly uniform black. During the pairing season the male soars up into the air and utters a love trill, but the usual call-note on the moors is a long-drawn *teezh*. The food of the Dunlin up here in summer is composed of insects and their larvæ, and various ground fruits. The nest is carefully concealed on the ground, often near a clear moorland pool, or in a swampy hollow in the centre of a grass tuft. It is little more than a hollow, lined with a few bits of dry herbage. The eggs are four in number, varying from buffish to greenish brown in ground colour, spotted and blotched with rich reddish brown and gray, sometimes streaked with dark brown. Even during the breeding season the Dunlin is remarkably social, and little parties congregate at the feeding-grounds. As soon as the young are reared, about the end of July, the movement to the coast begins, and for the remainder of the year the Dunlin is a littoral species. It should be remarked, however, that by far the greatest number of Dunlins are seen on our coasts in autumn, passing south, although the bird is fairly common all the winter through. The Redshank

may also be found commonly distributed in many of the more northern moorland districts during summer, breeding in all suitable localities; but we shall meet with this species in our ramble over the Broads, and therefore reserve our observations on its nesting economy until then (see p. 192).

Whilst on these Highland moors a passing notice of the Skua Gulls is necessary. Two species breed upon them. The most commonly distributed of these is RICHARDSON'S SKUA (*Stercorarius richardsoni*). It is a summer visitor to our islands, reaching its breeding-grounds at the end of April or beginning of May; and its nests are scattered up and down the moors, sometimes near the sea, at others a considerable distance from the coast. These nests are mere hollows lined with a few scraps of withered herbage, and made with little or no attempt at concealment. The two eggs are olive or reddish brown, spotted, blotched, and streaked with dark brown and gray. Richardson's Skua is distinguished by its smaller size, narrow pointed central tail feathers, and white shafts to the primaries. A light and dark race of this bird is found, and both of these forms interbreed even in the British Islands, the offspring instead of being intermediate in colour between the two extremes, taking the character of one or the other parent. The dark form is almost uniform sooty brown in colour; the light form has the upper parts slate-gray, the underparts white, including the sides of the neck nearly to the nape, which are suffused with yellow. The other species,

Northern
Scotland and
adjacent
isles.
Hebrides.

Unst and
Foula in
Shetland
Isles.

the GREAT SKUA (*S. catarrhactes*), is one of the most local and rare of British birds. It arrives at its breeding-grounds in April and the eggs are laid in May. The nest is similar to that of the preceding, placed on the moors, and the two eggs are pale or dark buffish brown, spotted with dark brown and grayish brown. The large size, uniform dark brown colour, and slightly rounded tail are distinguishing features of this bird. The Skuas are the terror of the Gulls and Terns, robbing them of the fish they catch, and playing the part of pirates to perfection. On shore they are guilty of devouring the eggs and young of their less powerful neighbours. The Skuas are birds of exceptionally powerful flight, as may be witnessed in the ease with which they chase the Terns and smaller Gulls. They wander far and wide across the sea during the non-breeding season. When their nests are threatened by human intruders the Skuas become very noisy and pugnacious, flying round and round overhead, so that it is an easy matter to identify them.

Widely
distributed.

Great numbers of WILD DUCKS (*Anas boschas*) frequent the moorland pools during summer for the purpose of rearing their broods. This bird is too well known to need description. The Wild Duck is an early breeder, its eggs often being laid by the middle of April, a month later in the extreme north. The nest is by no means always made near water, and is often placed among the heath, especially on an island. Several nests may often be found quite close together. They are made of any dry herbage at hand, and as the

eggs are laid a plentiful lining of down from the female's body is added. The eggs are from ten to sixteen in number and pale greenish yellow without markings. When the mother bird leaves her nest she is careful to cover her eggs to conceal them from the prying eyes of enemies. The Wild Duck may be met with in many other places, especially on the Broads; and there are few lakes that are not frequented by it at some period of the year, as I have been careful to remark in our rambles. As we are now with the Wild Duck, it is advisable to note its habits once for all. No Duck is more shy, none more wary. During autumn and winter this bird is gregarious and sociable, and at all seasons it may repeatedly be seen in parties. These large gatherings of Ducks are wariness personified, and the least alarm sends them off into the centre of the lake or flying away with arrow-like speed. In autumn our resident Wild Ducks are largely increased in numbers by birds from more northern lands. This bird is as active at night as during the day, sometimes more so. It is a voracious feeder, and visits certain localities, often at night, to satisfy its hunger, then frequenting streams, pastures, and stubbles. It never dives to obtain food, but obtains it in the shallows and round the banks. It will eat almost anything—grain, buds and shoots of herbage, slugs, worms, and the vast variety of insects by the waterside, sifted out of the mud or lurking amongst the vegetation, small fish and frogs, and even fruit. The note of this bird—the familiar *quack*—is too well known to need further description; but

during the love season the drake often utters a harsh grunting noise, and a shriller note.

North of
Inverness.
Hebrides.
Ireland :
Castle
Coole, Co.
Monaghan.

Banished from the fens and marshes of the low-lying English counties by the reclamation of its favourite haunts, the GRAY-LAG GOOSE (*Anser cinereus*) now almost only breeds upon these lonely northern moors. Its loud *gag-gag* and trumpet-like clamour is a well-known sound enough in early summer, amidst these vast scenes of desolation, this wilderness of heather, rock, and water. All through the breeding season this Goose is remarkably social, yet combats are of frequent occurrence between rival ganders. The big nest is made in April or May, a site being chosen among the heath or the coarse vegetation in the more swampy parts of its haunts, in the least frequented part of the moors. It is made of heather branches, rushes, fern, and turf, and lined with down and feathers from the parent's body. The six eggs are white and spotless, resembling in every respect those of the tame Goose, this bird's domesticated descendant. All through the nesting period the gander keeps watch and ward over his sitting mate. The principal food of this bird is grass, but in autumn it visits the stubbles for grain. The Gray-lag Goose is a resident in this country, but changes its ground according to season, and in autumn its numbers are largely increased by northern migrants. This bird is distinguished from its congeners by its flesh-coloured legs, feet, and beak, and the few black markings on the underparts.

The Commons and the Heathlands of our southern counties are in many respects moors in miniature; and, like these upland wastes, they are the haunt

of several interesting species peculiar to them, or nearly so. Beautiful little bits of wild nature do these places present us with. Their prickly thickets of gorse and bramble, their rolling expanse of bracken or turf, studded with birch-trees, guelder rose and mountain ash, crabs and blackthorns, are all the chosen haunts of bird life. True, they are not so wild as the northern moors, not so bleak or so breezy ; but they are full of charm, perhaps rendered all the sweeter and attractive by the woodland elements which relieve their broad expanse and endow them with a luxuriant beauty the uplands never aspire to.

Each part of the heaths and commons has its own particular feathered denizens. In the gorse coverts, for instance, we are pretty sure to meet with the STONECHAT (*Pratincola rubicola*), a little bird whose black head and chestnut breast render him easy to identify as he clings to the prickly branches and repeats his monotonous notes of *wee-chic, wee-chic, chic-chic-chic*, or chants his simple rambling song. Few nests are more difficult to find than the Stonechat's, and no birds will deceive you more if you will let them in decoying you from their treasure. It is placed well down at the roots of some gorse-bush, amongst the rank grass and weeds, and is made of dry grass and moss, and lined with hair and feathers. The eggs are four or five in number, pale blue in colour, with a few brown spots mostly at the larger end. The Stonechat, unlike its first cousin, the Whinchat, is a resident in this country, and clings to the coverts all through the year. It feeds on insects and their larvæ, especially beetles, and on small worms and even seeds.

Widely
distributed.

Widely
distributed.

Still keeping to the furze we shall be sure sooner or later to come across the LINNET (*Fringilla cannabina*), during the spring and early summer. The cock-birds are now resplendent in their wedding finery, and their carmine breasts are very conspicuous as they sit upon the yellow bloom-decked sprays. The Linnet is a sweet and persistent singer, and all through the spring he makes his haunt melodious with his tuneful song and his musical twitterings. The nest is built higher up in the branches of the furze, often very easily discovered, and is made of dry grass, dead branches of the furze, and often pieces of wool, lined with hair, feathers, wool, and vegetable down—a perfect little picture of rustic neatness. Six eggs are laid in this tiny cradle, bluish green in ground colour, speckled with dark brownish red and gray. The female sits the most, brooding very closely over her charge. As soon as the young are reared the old gregarious habits are resumed, and the furze coverts are deserted for the fields where the winter is passed. Linnets live principally on insects in spring and early summer, but for the remainder of the year seeds are almost their chief support. The flocks of Linnets do not disband until the last days of March, and at that time the males may often be heard warbling in concert as they sit on the tree-tops.

South coast
counties,
Surrey,
Oxon,
Worcester,
Leicester,
Derby,
South Yorks.

The rare and local DARTFORD WARBLER (*Sylvia provincialis*) is another bird of the gorse thickets, but only found regularly in certain favoured districts. Here the greed of collectors and severe winters have rendered it much rarer than was formerly the case. Its note is sufficient

to identify the species—a loud musical *pitchoo*—even if the chestnut breast and dark brown upper plumage and long tail have not already served to do so. It is a skulking bird, yet fond of sunning itself and warbling its little song on the topmost sprays, and taking short flights into the air, then dropping into the cover. Its food is largely composed of insects and larvæ, many of the former being caught as they flit by the bird's perching-place. This bird begins to breed about the middle of April, making a flimsy net-like nest near the foot of the bushes in their densest part, of dead grass-stalks, withered furze, and moss, and lined with finer grasses and mayhap a few hairs. Both the nest and the five eggs are very similar to those of the Whitethroat, the latter especially, so much so that the most careful identification is required.

Another very interesting bird, the NIGHTJAR Widely distributed. (*Caprimulgus europæus*), has its home upon the commons and the heaths. It is a summer migrant to our islands, arriving about the middle of May, and leaving towards the end of September. It may be readily identified by its nocturnal habits, coming forth at sunset, by its peculiar soft bat-like flight—as it turns and twists the light under surface of the wings is very distinct—and by its extraordinary churring and chattering notes. It feeds on beetles and moths, hunting high and low for its prey, beating across the open heath and under the trees by the woodside, often toying with its mate in mid-air. It sleeps during the daytime, very often on a stone-heap or in a shady nook amongst the bracken, and when disturbed flies off in a very dazed sort of way as if at a loss

where to hide itself. The singular note of the Nightjar once heard can never be forgotten or mistaken for any other species. As it flies to and fro an oft-repeated note like *co-ic*, *co-ic* is uttered, but when the bird is at rest, either on a branch, a fence, or even on the ground, the famous churring cry is given forth. It may best be expressed as *r-r-r-r-r* sounded with great speed and emphasis, and often continues for several minutes together. This bird breeds late, its eggs seldom being found before the beginning of June. It makes little or no nest, laying its two oval eggs upon the ground, usually at the foot of a tree or under the shelter of a bush or clump of fern. They are white, beautifully mottled, veined, and clouded with dark and light brown and gray. Only one brood is reared in the season, and very soon after the young are strong upon the wing preparations for the great southern flight are made. It should be remarked that the Nightjar is silent long before it leaves this country in autumn.

On the commons and the heaths of the more lowland counties we shall meet with another very interesting bird, and that is the STONE CURLEW (*Edicnemus crepitans*). He loves the dry and sandy heaths where the ground is rough and broken, not all covered with vegetation but varied by patches of bare pebbly soil. He is wary and watchful enough, and generally takes wing as soon as his haunts are invaded. The Stone Curlew is most active at night, and his loud cry may be heard at intervals all through the short hours of darkness during the summer months. Most of the birds are summer visitors only, but a few are said to spend the winter in the extreme

Wolds,
downs, and
plains from
Yorks to
Wilts.

south-west of England. Those that leave us do so in October, and return to their old haunts in April. This bird begins to lay in May, depositing its two eggs in a little hollow where the ground is bare of vegetation and strewn with pebbles. They are buff in ground colour, spotted and streaked with light and dark brown and gray, and so closely resemble the colour of the ground that their discovery is very difficult. The Stone Curlew feeds on worms, snails, beetles, frogs, and even mice. This bird is a very conspicuous one on the heath, standing high; and when it takes flight the white bands across the wings and the white on the outermost tail feathers are very striking. The general colour of its upper plumage is grayish brown, streaked with dark brown, each feather margined with buff; the underparts are white, streaked with brown on the breast and flanks; the two black moustachial lines, the black and yellow bill, and the very large prominent eye, are also noteworthy features of this species. This plumage, especially in summer, is very protective, a fact of which the bird seems fully aware, as it often squats flat on the ground when menaced by danger.

Where the heaths and commons are more than usually wooded, we may sometimes flush the BLACK GROUSE (*Tetrao tetrix*), a bird easily recog-

England
and
Scotland.
Locally.

nised by his glossy blue-black plumage, scarlet wattle, white wing-bar, and lyre-shaped tail. The female, however, is mottled brown and buff, more like the female Red Grouse in appearance, but larger. The Black Grouse is also a dweller in the woods, but as he shows a decided preference for open situations—even bare hillsides—I have

deemed it best to deal with him in the present ramble. The Black Grouse is fond of a swampy haunt; water seems essential to his residence. He is a polygamous species, and this fact renders him a more than usually interesting bird during the season of courtship. Certain recognised meeting-places are selected during the spring days, where the males retire to fight their battles and win their brides by performing a variety of antics which are sure to interest and amuse the observer fortunate enough to watch them. As is usual with birds of this class, the female alone performs the duties of bringing up the brood. She begins to nest early in May. Her rude cradle is little more than a hollow among the fern and brushwood, into which is scraped a few bits of dry vegetation for a lining. In this she lays from six to ten eggs, buff in ground colour, spotted and speckled with reddish brown and pale brown. She sits closely, depending for safety upon her own brown dress, which is in strict harmony with surrounding tints. The Black Grouse is a skulking bird, only rising when compelled, flying heavily, and rarely for any long distance. It is also very fond of perching in trees, the cock-bird especially, and generally roosts at night in the branches of an evergreen. Seeds, tender buds and shoots, fruits, berries, insects, and larvæ form the food of this species.

Widely
distributed.

With a brief notice of the LAPWING (*Vanellus cristatus*) we will bring this ramble to a close. This remarkably handsome bird is one of the commonest of its order, and may not only be met with on the heaths, the commons, and the moors, but also on the open pastures. It may readily be

identified by its curious erratic flight and aërial gambols, and its mewing notes of *weet-a-weet*, *pee-weet-weet*, as it circles over your head in alarm for its eggs or young. It has the general colour of the upper parts green glossed with purple; the crown, throat, and breast are black, a crest of long, narrow feathers ornamenting the former; the remainder of the underparts are white, except the tail coverts, which are chestnut-buff; the tail is white, broadly tipped with black on all but the two outermost feathers, which are uniform white. It should be remarked that in winter plumage the throat is rufous white. The Lapwing changes its ground with the season, and towards winter very often forsakes entirely its summer haunts, retiring to the flat coasts and marine meadows. It is an early breeder, and its eggs may be found in southern localities during the first week of April. Vast numbers of these are gathered for the table, and justly esteemed as a great delicacy. The Lapwing makes little or no nest, laying her four eggs in a hollow in the ground, often in the footprints of a horse or cow, not unfrequently in the centre of a tuft of rushes, or even on the top of a molehill. They are pale olive-green or brown in ground colour, boldly spotted, blotched, and streaked with blackish brown and gray, and are large for the size of the bird. The Lapwing becomes exceedingly clamorous if its breeding-place is disturbed, and many and varied are the wiles it displays to entice you from its eggs or helpless young. These birds are more or less gregarious throughout the year, and numbers of nests may be found on the same stretch of ground. The food of this species is composed of worms,

snails, insects, and grubs, and the various creatures of the shore. To a certain extent they are nocturnal in their habits, and their loud, plaintive cries may be heard almost all night long in spring and summer.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Red Grouse .	Resident	Harsh <i>go bac, bac, bac, bac</i>	Chestnut-brown, spotted and vermiculated with black, scarlet wattle over eye
Ring Ousel .	April to September and October	Noisy <i>tac-tac-tac</i>	Brownish black, broad white band on breast
Twite . . .	Resident	Long-drawn <i>twa-ite</i>	Reddish brown above, rump rosy, paler brown on breast and flanks; feathers with dark centres
Meadow Pipit .	Resident	Plaintive <i>peep</i>	Above olive - brown, most of feathers with darker centres, underparts white streaked with brown
Cuckoo . . .	April to August	Hoarse chatter and bubbling cry (female)	Slate-gray above, tail nearly black, grayish white below, barred with dark brown
Merlin . . .	Resident	Tremulous scream	Slaty blue above, the feathers with dark shafts, rufous striped with brown below
Golden Plover.	Resident	Flute-like <i>klee-wee</i>	Black spotted with yellow above; belly black in summer, white in winter
Curlew . . .	Resident	Shrill <i>curlee</i>	Mottled brown above, but rump white, below white streaked with brown
Common Snipe	Resident	Long-drawn <i>skyach</i> ; shrill <i>tee-ik-tee-uk</i> . Bleating or drumming	Brown, black, and yellow above; white below, barred on breast and neck with brown
Dunlin . . .	Resident	Long-drawn <i>teezh</i>	Black, chestnut, and gray above; black and white below; conspicuous white wing-bar

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Richardson's Skua . . .	April to September and October	Loud <i>keow</i>	Either uniform sooty brown, or slate-gray above, white below
Great Skua . . .	April to September and October	Loud <i>ak-ak</i> ; scream like word <i>skua</i>	Dark brown above, slightly paler brown below
Wild Duck . . .	Resident	Loud <i>quack</i>	Head and neck greenish black, alar spectrum purple; brown, black, gray, and white above; chestnut and white below
Gray-lag Goose	Resident	Loud <i>gag-gag</i>	Brown and gray above, grayish below
Stonechat . . .	Resident	Oft-repeated <i>wee-chic</i>	Head and upper parts black and rufous, except rump, which is white; white patch on wing, sides of neck and breast white, remainder of underparts rufous
Linnet . . .	Resident	Shrill twitter	Rich brown above, buff below, wings and tail margined with white, front of head and most of breast carmine
Dartford Warbler . . .	Resident	Clear and musical <i>pitchoo</i>	Blackish brown above, throat and breast chestnut, tail long and graduated, tipped with white
Nightjar . . .	May to September	Oft-repeated <i>co-ic</i> and <i>r</i> sounded quickly	Gray, black, and buff, pencilled, mottled, and vermiculated
Stone Curlew . . .	April to September and October	Loud plaintive cry	Brown and buff above, white below, streaked with brown on breast and flanks; white wing-bars, and markings very conspicuous
Black Grouse . . .	Resident	Harsh cry	Glossy blue-black, patch on wings and under tail coverts white, wattle over eye scarlet
Lapwing . . .	Resident	Nasal <i>pee-weet</i>	Green and purple above; black, white, and chestnut below

RAMBLE VIII.

UP THE MOUNTAINS.

MANY pleasant hours may be spent with the birds among the mountains; for they are the haunt of some of our rarest species. They are also the last refuge of other birds which civilisation has driven from more lowland scenes; and here among the hills, inaccessible to all human enemies except the most persevering, these last remnants of our ancient pre-Roman avifauna find haunts congenial to their wants, and that seclusion which their retiring habits demand. It is only in the spring and summer, however, that the mountain-tops will repay one for the exertion of climbing to them, that is from an ornithological point of view. Winter drives most of their feathered inhabitants lower down the hillsides, and the mountain-crests are then bare and desolate beyond description.

Our path right up the valley has been enlivened by birds that prefer the wooded and cultivated districts. With the wilder scenery other birds replace them, and now up here among the mountain-tops a small and select avifauna is met with unknown on lower land. The most characteristic bird of our British hills is the



PTARMIGAN (*Tetrao mutus*), and one of the most local too. The Ptarmigan (and its several climatic races) is a northern bird, strictly speaking an Arctic one, only found on the tundras above forest growth or at high elevations in more southern lands. On the highest hills of Scotland this bird finds a climate equal to that of sea-level above forest growth in Arctic Europe; and on these bleak, wind-swept summits it lives all the year round, rarely, if ever, descending below the snow in winter, unless temporarily driven down from the highest tops by an unusually severe storm. But its constant residence on the hilltops has been the cause of much modification in its habits and in its plumage. It is a curious fact, and one that goes far to prove the utility of colour in Nature, that white birds or animals are excessively rare. Take birds alone. The number of pure white birds, or birds in which white is the predominating colour of the plumage, is very, very few; in comparison with the twelve thousand or so known species absolutely a unit of no great importance. But the exceptions prove the rule, and demonstrate how closely the colour of living creatures is in harmony with the conditions of their life. These Ptarmigan that have just risen from the stones at our feet on the mountain-top have constantly to be changing the colour of their plumage with the changing season. Now, in the spring, they are clothed in a dress of dark brown mottled with yellowish brown—tints in beautiful harmony with the lichens and mosses. In autumn they will change this dress for one of pale gray, vermiculated with black—or rather they are slowly changing colour all the summer through

Scotch
mountains.
South to
Arran.

with the changing aspect of their haunts, the latter tints being emphasized at a time when the mosses and lichens are burnt up and beginning to fade. Then comes the period of the winter snows—when the mountain-tops are decked in a white pall which lingers over them until the following spring. Our Ptarmigan must change their dress to elude their enemies, and the browns and grays are doffed, and a plumage of dazzling whiteness is assumed in their stead. White ground and white birds harmonise together, and the Ptarmigan lives safe in his disguise until the melting of the snow, when his browns and yellows are renewed with the changing year. That this masquerade is effectual every one can testify who has met the Ptarmigan at home. I have absolutely walked through a flock of these birds and nearly trod upon them before one took wing; and in spite of my closest scrutiny, the squatting birds have risen one by one unseen from the ground around me, as I stood completely bewildered and nonplussed, yet filled with indescribable admiration for the feathered tricksters. Keen of eye must the Falcon or the Eagle be that can detect the birds from the stones amongst which they nestle so securely. Like all ground birds, the Ptarmigan never cares to use its wings until absolutely compelled. Sometimes it will fly across the valleys from one hill to another; and it is capable of going with great speed, its wings beating rapidly, or held out arched and stiff when it sails over the brows with no visible effort. Buds and tender shoots of the mountain herbage are its favourite food; and in autumn it feasts upon the various ground fruits that grow in its wild haunts.

Ptarmigan pair like Red Grouse, and the female makes her scanty nest beneath the shelter of a rock or bush. The eggs are laid in May, and are from eight to twelve in number, buffish white, spotted with dark brown. They, too, are highly protective in colour. As soon as the young are reared the birds begin to pack, much earlier than the Red Grouse, and for the remainder of the year are more or less gregarious. It is also worthy of remark that the note of the Ptarmigan is much less loud and startling than the cry of the Red Grouse, and the bird is a much more silent one. Of all our Game Birds the Ptarmigan is the wildest, and the least dependent upon the protection of man.

Another interesting bird we may be fortunate enough to come across on a few favoured mountain-tops is the DOTTEREL (*Charadrius morinellus*). Of all the birds that we shall meet with here the Dotterel is the tamest. It seems literally to have no fear of man, and I have seen it when on migration and in parties so utterly regardless of its safety as to run to and fro over the bare ground on the hilltops, almost within reach of my hand. It is a source of satisfaction to know that man has little opportunity of taking advantage of this confidence, for the Dotterel nestles far from human haunts; and the migrating individuals that pass over the British Islands to and from the Arctic regions do not stay long enough to pay the penalty of their trustfulness. As may be gathered from the foregoing remarks, the Dotterel is a migrant. It comes to a few favoured spots in our islands to breed, but elsewhere it is only seen on passage. Dotterels appear to

Grampians,
Northern
Highlands,
Orkney.
Possibly in
Lake
District of
England.

cross country, and to follow mountain chains rather than coast lines, in this country at any rate; and I have met with them migrating over the Sussex Downs and the Peak of Derbyshire. They appear always to journey in companies, and to travel very quickly, especially in spring, to and from their winter quarters in the Great Desert. The Dotterel breeds in June, and makes its slight nest among the mountain herbage. Here it lays three very handsome eggs, grayish or olive-buff, blotched and spotted with dark brown and gray. It will thus be noted that the number of eggs is abnormal for this group of birds (four being the usual clutch), and the reason for this departure from the rule is probably some very interesting feature in the bird's economy yet undiscovered. Another remarkable circumstance is the fact that the cock-bird, being smaller and of duller plumage than the hen, hatches the eggs and rears the young! Dotterels are not very noisy birds, but in the breeding season the male soars and trills, and the usual call-note between the sexes is a low, soft, and prolonged *dūte*, sometimes modulated into *durr-dūte* or *durr*. Like the Ringed Plover, the Dotterel is the essence of wariness at the nest, and will tire out all but the most persistent patience before it will venture near its treasure when conscious that it is being watched. Insects, worms, and grubs, and the tender shoots of mountain herbage form the food of this bird. The Dotterel has the upper parts—except the head which is black—grayish brown; the chin, upper throat, and long eyestripes are white; the breast is chestnut, the belly black.

Although scarcely a bird of the mountain-tops,

one cannot well investigate the ornithology of such a region without noticing the GREENSHANK (*Totanus glottis*). It is one of our rarest waders during the summer months, only frequenting a few favoured spots in the Highlands and the Hebrides. I know of a breeding-place of the Greenshank among the Cullin Hills in Skye, not far from rugged Sligiah—one of the wildest places in all wild Scotland—and above which the Ptarmigan has its haunt. Here it lives on the marshy moors below the highest summits, frequenting the shores of the mountain lakes, and rearing its young among the treacherous swamps. The Greenshank soon informs you of its presence when once its haunt is entered. At the least alarm the old birds rise, and uttering their loud double call-note of *tee-yū*, commence to fly to and fro in dire alarm. As you get still closer to the nest or helpless young, more demonstrative do the parents become, and the female especially often pitches headlong to the ground, and runs about with half-open wings, trying all she can to concentrate attention on herself. We just alluded to the young as “helpless.” Well, so they are in many respects, yet not in all. They are born with that in their nature which causes them instinctively to scatter and hide themselves among the herbage and the stones at the first warning note from their parents; and when once that signal is given, and the tiny, long-legged, striped balls of down have squatted to the earth, it requires no ordinary scrutiny to discover them. Here they lie still and inanimate as the stones, and their mottled dress harmonises so closely with the objects around them that we may search

Highlands
and
Hebrides.
South to
Argyle and
Perth.

and search each square inch of the moor without success. The Greenshank makes its scanty nest about the middle of May on a dry hummock in the swamps, or beneath the shelter of a heath-tuft by the loch-side, and in this the hen-bird lays her four supremely handsome pear-shaped eggs. They are buff in ground colour, spotted and blotched with dark brown and gray. The food of this bird is insects and worms, and even the tiny fish that swim in shoals in the shallows are often captured as the Greenshank runs or wades along the waterside. Like the Common Sandpiper, this bird is only a summer migrant to the British Islands; but during the seasons of its spring and autumn flights — April and May, and September into October — the latter especially, it is much more widely distributed along our coasts, and the number of indigenous birds is increased by individuals passing to and from breeding-grounds much further north in Arctic Europe. The Greenshank is readily identified by its note, by its olive-green legs, and slightly recurved bill.

Northern
Scotland.
Shetlands.

One of the most interesting birds of the mountains is the little SNOW BUNTING (*Emberiza nivalis*). It is only within more recent years that the fact of its summer residence with us has been satisfactorily established by the discovery of its nest on the mountains of Scotland. This charming bird is well enough known in the winter months; for at that season flights of Snow Buntings seek refuge on our shores from the rigours of the Arctic regions. And yet the Snow Bunting has no regular winter home. It is one of those birds that go no further from their Arctic breeding-grounds

than they are absolutely compelled ; and in many places, especially in Russia and Siberia, they stay the winter through, picking up a precarious sustenance on the post-roads and near the farm-houses. In spite of this fact the Snow Bunting may be classed as a regular winter visitor to the British Islands, although its numbers vary considerably year by year. Snow Buntings are most aptly named. The mention of their name recalls to me some of the wildest and most wintry days I have ever spent among the birds—of days on the dreary sand-banks of the Wash, when the hail and sleet-laden wind has swept like keen knives across the wilderness, and drove the Snow Birds before it like flecks of ocean foam—of days in more sheltered districts when the country-side has been inches deep in snow, and the flocks of “Snowflakes” have picked a bare living from the dung-heaps in company with Starlings and even more homely birds. And whilst we are with the Snow Buntings on the lowlands it is well to call attention to this bird’s perching on trees. Our scientific wiseacres have stated that this bird never settles on the branches ; but no more absurd error was ever made. On the mountains here, where no trees exist, the bird of course is never seen upon them ; but in lower districts it habitually perches, as I for one have satisfactorily proved by absolutely shooting it from them (winter of 1879–80 in Endcliffe Woods, Sheffield). But the Snow Bunting is as interesting in summer far up the hillsides in its mountain home ; as I can testify from seeing it fluttering among the rocks on the summits of the Grampians, although fortune has never yet been kind enough to reward me with a

sight of its nest. This is a most beautiful little structure, constructed in a crevice of the rocks or under the stones. It is composed of twigs and roots, moss and grass, and lined with hair and feathers. The eggs, six in number, do not exhibit the usual Bunting streaks and scratches, but are bluish or yellowish white, spotted and blotched with rich dark brown, paler brown, and gray. In the breeding season the male Snow Bunting utters a pleasing little song, either when sitting on the rocks or hovering in the air. The call-note is very similar to the *peezh* of the Greenfinch. This bird in summer at its breeding grounds is readily identified by its strongly contrasted black and white plumage. It might also be remarked that the Snow Bunting is the only small Passerine bird that has its summer haunts in our islands so far above the level of the sea.

Whilst studying bird life high up on the breezy summits, our reverie is sometimes disturbed by the croaking of the Raven prowling along the hillsides in quest of plunder; but this bird has its usual haunts lower down the hills, and we shall meet with it in other rambles under more favourable circumstances for studying its ways (see p. 210).

What imbues the mountains with their greatest charm, from an ornithological point of view, is that they are the dwelling-place—the last refuge and stronghold of the noblest of our Birds of Prey. Driven from the lowlands by spreading civilisation, and the transformation of the forests into farms, these last large remnants of our ancient avifauna have retired to the hilltops and the mountain

districts where the wilderness is still unchanged and man's persecution is not so persistent. Well may the naturalist mourn the changed conditions of his country that have banished such splendid birds to haunts inaccessible to all but the most persevering observer; well may he recall with regret the days not so very long ago, when these interesting species dwelt in closer proximity to man. Now he must seek them among the mountains, the thinly peopled northern heights, for they alone present conditions under which these big birds can dwell in our islands at all. Here the GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) still lingers amongst us; here the WHITE-TAILED EAGLE (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), in spite of all attempts to exterminate him, still dwells and flourishes in the present year of grace (1891). It is well, perhaps, to specify the exact date, for who knows but in the near future it may be recalled with melancholy interest, when these handsome birds shall have passed from our resident fauna for ever! Of all wild birds these Eagles are the wildest—fitting ornaments to scenes of savage beauty, where the rocks and cloud-capped peaks, the clear sparkling lochs and streams, the heather, and the mosses and lichens assist in making a picture of sublime harmonious grandeur, complete in every detail of colour and of form. I know of nothing more grand than the sight of a Golden Eagle sweeping across the gloom-decked valleys on wide-spread wings, just before the mountain storm descends in sudden fury. All is abnormally still and uncanny; the distant mountains to windward are already draped in

Wildest
districts of
Scotland
and Ireland.

black mist, the last golden sunlight is pouring through a rift in the rapidly closing clouds, and all nature seems preparing, in silence, for the coming strife among the elements. Then, indeed, does the Eagle assume an unusual grandeur as he wings his flight across the dark valley on recurved and slowly beating pinions, perhaps to the accompaniment of distant peals of thunder, betaking himself to a mountain refuge where in safety he can defy the tempest and wait the passing of the storm. Or see him yet again on the bright, hot summer days, sailing with no apparent effort high above the highest mountain-tops, looking black against the blue, cloud-flecked sky, and imagine if you can a better or a more harmonious ornament to this upland wilderness. All praise be then accorded to those landed proprietors of the north that endeavour to preserve him on their property; and there are men well worthy of the approbation who guard their Eagles as they do their game!

Upon the wing these two Eagles appear very much alike; but the Golden Eagle is much the darkest looking of the two, and his feathered legs are at all ages a never-failing distinction from the White-tailed Eagle, in which the lower half of the leg is bare. This latter bird, when adult, has a white tail; it is also much more of a maritime species, and is by far the most frequently seen among mountains on the coast. Of the two species, the Golden Eagle is on an average slightly the biggest. The Golden Eagle breeds early. He who would see their eggs must be prepared to ascend the hills before the last snows have melted from them. These birds pair for

life, and consequently have a sort of vested right in some certain cliff, where for years they rear their offspring. The nest is often a huge structure of sticks, lined with moss, dry grass, and almost invariably a few tufts of a mountain plant in a green state. It is built in a crevice or on the sides of some lofty precipice among the mountains. The eggs, usually two in number, sometimes three, are bluish white in ground colour, more or less thickly blotched and sprinkled with reddish brown and gray. Generally one of the eggs is much more handsomely marked than the other, and in some cases one will be almost entirely without markings at all. The White-tailed Eagle is just as much attached to its nesting-place, but its bulky nest is placed upon the sea-cliffs—a precipice formed by a mountain-side falling prone to the ocean being its favourite home. The nest itself is very similar to the Golden Eagle's, but, curiously enough, the two eggs are white and colourless. In spite of what has been stated to the contrary, the Eagles are cowardly birds when their nests are invaded by man. The popular notion is that the Eagle will attack even human intruders, but such is not the case; and when disturbed from their home the old birds are either content to watch our movements whilst sitting on some distant crag, or evince their anger by swooping past the face of the cliff, but always well out of harm's way. This is the case even when there are young birds in the nest, as I have frequently proved. For downright pluck in defending its nest an infuriated Missel-thrush would give any Eagle a

good start and a beating, both in courage and in pugnacity.

Both these Eagles feed on a great variety of prey. The Golden Eagle is perhaps the cleanest feeder of the two, and eschews carrion so long as living fare is to be obtained ; but even he, when hard pressed by stress of weather or scarcity, will not hesitate to feast on any dead carcase he may chance to find upon the hills. The White-tailed Eagle, however, in this particular is little cleaner than a Vulture. Indeed, he is the Vulture of the north, incessantly poking and prying about the sea-shore and the sheep-farms for carrion ; fish, flesh, and fowl all being eaten indiscriminately. Both birds, however, chase living creatures, flying them down in the open, or even driving the more powerful animals bewildered over the cliffs. The blue hares and the Ptarmigan that live in such plenty on the mountain-tops, and the lambs and weakly sheep, and the rabbits lower down the hillsides, are all sought by them. Eagles are not very noisy birds, but on occasion, especially in the breeding season, utter an oft-repeated barking or yelping cry. During the autumn and winter months these birds are from time to time met with in more lowland districts, either young ones wandering from their birthplace, migrants from across the seas, or individuals that have been either tempted south by following in the train of Arctic migrants—Ducks and Geese especially—or driven from their native mountains by long and severe winters.

Here among these northern heights in the country of the Eagles we may still, in a few favoured localities, meet with the HEN HARRIER

(*Circus cyaneus*). It is perhaps the most conspicuous bird of the hills, its underparts below the breast, and the upper tail coverts, being white; its upper parts, throat and breast, gray; its wings black. The conspicuousness of the Hen Harrier is one of the most interesting features in its economy. Showy plumage among the Birds of Prey is a most exceptional circumstance. These birds are usually dressed as "quietly" as possible, in a garb least likely to attract attention or create alarm among those creatures on which they prey. But here in the male Hen Harrier we have a bird easily seen a mile away as it beats along the dark hillsides or over the heather. Why this conspicuous dress? Now I am of opinion that this showy plumage may be of great service to the Harrier—a disguise in which it may steal towards its quarry unsuspected until all too late for the victim to escape. The rapacious Hen Harrier seems to be masquerading in the dress of the harmless Gull! and by his slow, laboured movements, and the methodical way in which he quarters the ground, he might readily be mistaken for a Gull, even by human intelligence. In fine it seems to be another instance of Mimicry in Nature, another case where an enemy is disguised as a friend, and the dress of a harmless species has been imitated by another of rapacious tendencies. Precisely similar remarks apply to the Marsh Harrier, to Montagu's Harrier, and their allied forms—all birds frequenting open, treeless districts where their conspicuous appearance can readily be mistaken for more harmless fowl.

Widely
distributed,
but very
local.

The Hen Harrier is only a summer visitor

to the northern mountains. The migrations of this species are ranked amongst the shortest of any undertaken by our summer birds of passage, very often not reaching beyond the northern shores of the Mediterranean. On the other hand, the Marsh Harrier is a bird of much longer flight, extending its winter wanderings as far south as the Transvaal. The first time I made the acquaintance of the Hen Harrier, I was also fortunate enough to find its nest. It was amongst the mountains of Skye, just below the crests where the blue hare lives, and in country frequented by the Ptarmigan and the Eagle. The time was late in May. I first met with him as he flew along in a sauntering manner above the tall heather which here grew breast-high. Day by day I used to visit him and his mate, and from their reluctance to leave the spot, I concluded their home was either already made or about to be among the heath. At last, after diligent search, I was rewarded, and in the thickest part of the cover came across a wide flat nest of heather-stems lined with a few grass-bents. It contained two eggs, and two more were eventually laid during the succeeding days, when the hen began to sit. These eggs are pale bluish green without markings. Nests of this bird are sometimes destroyed by sheep walking over them. I also had the good fortune to meet with this bird in its winter haunts, where its habits and movements are much the same as on our British hills. The Hen Harrier feeds on small birds, mice, and frogs, and like most of the smaller Raptores it catches coleopterous insects. I might just call attention to the fact that the female of this species is slightly larger than

the male—an almost universal rule in this order—brown in colour, streaked with reddish brown, and the tail is broadly barred with buffish brown.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Ptarmigan . .	Resident	Low croaking cry	Browns, black, buff, and white, according to season. (<i>See</i> pp. 171, 172)
Dotterel . .	May to September	Soft prolonged <i>dūte</i> or <i>durr</i>	Grayish brown and buff above, crown black with white lines below, below black and chestnut
Greenshank .	April to September and October	Loud <i>tee-yū</i>	Above black, gray, and brown; rump white, below white streaked with brown, tail white barred with brown
Snow Bunting.	Few resident. Majority October to April	Long-drawn <i>peesh</i>	Black and white
Golden Eagle .	Resident	Loud barking cry	Dark brown, nape pale brown
White-tailed Eagle . .	Resident	Loud barking cry	Brown, pale on head and neck, tail white
Hen Harrier .	April to September	Low chattering note	Above and breast slate-gray, wings black, remainder of underparts white

RAMBLE IX.

OVER THE BROADS AND SWAMPS.

NEXT to the moors the Broads are perhaps the district which has been least changed by the march of civilisation and improvement. These wastes of marsh and water, although many, many acres have been drained and "improved" away, still retain much of their ancient charm, and though many of the birds that dwelt within their aquatic fastnesses have been driven away or exterminated by civilised man, there are yet many more that still cling to their old-time strongholds. Even to mention the names of a few of these now banished birds is to conjure in one's mind's eye a picture of the Broads in their glory, as they existed centuries ago. We can picture the magnificent Crane coming at her appointed time to these marshy solitudes, and making her big nest on the flat, swampy plain, where she could detect approaching enemies from afar. We can visit in our imagination the colonies of curious Spoonbills that were once established here, those big white birds with the spatulated beak that were wont to dabble and scoop in the muddy shallows; or the long-legged Avocet with his



upturned bill; and the charming Black Tern that returned each season with the spring. All are gone—banished now for ever from their watery solitudes, and their names have become only memories, forgotten even by most folk, yet lovingly kept green in the calendar of the naturalist and the student of British Birds.

In spite, however, of the serious loss the naturalist has sustained by the banishment of so many species of exceptional interest, there are still many birds upon the Broads to engage his attention. Summer and winter alike these places teem with bird life, and some of the most local species have their haunt and habitation on them. We will glance at the few peculiar land birds first. Rarest and most local of them all is the BEARDED REEDLING (*Panurus biarmicus*). No other British bird can easily be confused with the Bearded Reedling—the slate-gray head and black moustachial lines of the male; the rufous brown upper plumage, the pinkish underparts, and the long, tawny tail of both sexes, distinguish it from all other species. Its haunt is in the reed thickets, where it may be seen hopping from stem to stem, or passing through the forest of stalks with amazing speed; sometimes crossing the narrow canals of water in dipping uncertain flight from one bed to another, or fluttering above the purple tops of the reeds for a fleeting moment, then dropping down again into the cover. Its notes are very like those of the Titmice—*ping-ping*, or *hee-rr, hee-rr*. In autumn family parties of Reedlings may be met with among the withering reeds, and then, perhaps, its actions are most engaging. Although

Principally
in reed beds
of Norfolk.
Said to
breed in
Devon (*fide*
Mr. Saun-
ders).

I am of opinion that this bird is only distantly related to the Titmice, in many of its habits it reminds you of those restless birds. All along the thicket you may follow them as they flit before you one after the other, now in full view, anon lost among the stems, the only sign of their presence being their by no means loud call-notes. The food of this bird in summer is composed of insects, and in winter principally of small seeds. The nest is made of dry grass and bits of reed, and often lined with the flowers of the latter. It is placed under a tuft of aquatic herbage or amongst the rushes on the drier ground. The eggs are five or six in number, yellowish white in ground colour, streaked and speckled with irregular lines of dark brown.

Widely
distributed,
but local.

Within these fens and marshes the SHORT-EARED OWL (*Strix brachyotus*) also brings up its young. This bird is as much a dweller on the moors as the marshes, but as we are certain of meeting him on the Broads, and as those places are more accessible to the majority of observers, it is perhaps wisest to deal with its economy during our present ramble. It may readily be distinguished by the longitudinal streaks on the lower parts and its short ear-tufts. It is one of the most diurnal of the Owls, and may often be seen hunting the marshy flats and rough broken ground in the full glare of noonday. Mice and other small mammals, and frogs, are its favourite food. In the method of its nesting it differs considerably from its congeners. Its nest is made upon the ground, usually on some little hillock in the marshes, or amongst the heather on the moors, and not unfrequently in a very bare and exposed

spot. This nest hardly deserves the name, for it is little more than a hollow trod by the bird, into which a few scraps of dry herbage have been scraped. The six eggs are pure white. When disturbed from her nest the sitting bird flies quickly away, but sometimes returns almost directly, especially if there are young, to watch your movements from the air. Often when the nest contains eggs she remains upon them, shielding them by her own inconspicuous dress, until compelled to rise. We shall meet with the Short-eared Owl again in our rambles by the shore, when one or two other facts in its economy may be noted.

The MARSH HARRIER (*Circus æruginosus*), is also another bird to be met with on the Broads, and one of the rarest and most local of our Raptores. The plumage in which it is generally met with in this country is dark reddish brown, becoming rufous white on the head and nape; the grayer adult dress is seldom or never seen in British examples. The long wings and tail are another marked characteristic. Here in the marshes the fortunate observer may watch it flying backwards and forwards at no very great height, systematically hunting for food, and dropping down from time to time upon the unsuspecting creatures that form its food. Birds, leverets, young rabbits, frogs, insects and eggs compose the food of the Marsh Harrier. The latter are sought for most diligently, every unprotected nest containing eggs being liable to the unwelcome visits of this rapacious bird—every foot of ground being searched with a thoroughness scarcely credible as it beats along in slow and graceful

Norfolk,
Devonshire,
Central
Scotland.
Local in
Ireland.

flight. Its bulky nest is made upon the ground under the shelter of a bush or clump of herbage, or even in the swamps among the reeds. It is made of reeds, sticks, and lined with grass and scraps of other aquatic vegetation. The eggs, from four to six in number, are pale bluish green. The Marsh Harrier winters in Africa in the country beyond the Atlas and north of the Equator, occasionally visiting the Transvaal. Incessant persecution is slowly but surely exterminating this fine and handsome bird; and the very fact of its being so rarely, if at all, seen in its adult plumage in this country, bears sad if eloquent testimony to the way in which it is shot down at every opportunity.

As may very naturally be expected, the Broads are richest in water birds. The abundance of cover and the vast extent of the watery solitudes are a grand attraction for many of the shyest and the rarest of these dwellers in the marshes. Some few of these, as we have already noted, have passed away before the spread of civilisation; others are slowly following, and year by year are becoming scarcer. One of the last lingering species is the RUFF (*Machetes pugnax*). The Ruff is another fast-disappearing link with the past. At one time it was a regular and a common visitor to the Broads and fenlands of the eastern counties—now only a few odd pairs breed upon them. This bird is better known as a migrant, passing over our islands to and from more favoured haunts across the North Sea; and it is only a few that linger behind, perhaps the last survivors of the Ruffs of more prosperous days, and destined soon to die completely away. Some

Norfolk.
Elsewhere
in England,
in Scotland,
and Ireland,
on migra-
tion.

of the habits of the Ruff are extremely interesting ; for instance, that of fighting for the females in spring and assembling at certain recognised spots, where the males engage in their strange tournaments, and display their plumes and collars to the admiring females, known as "Reeves." The Ruff is polygamous, a most exceptional fact in the class of birds to which this species belongs (Waders). It arrives at its breeding-grounds on the Broads about the middle of April, and for the ensuing month these combats for the Reeves are constantly taking place. The males are now in splendid plumage, the singular ruff of feathers round the neck being at the limit of its beauty. This collar is almost as remarkable for its eccentricity as for the variety of its colours ; and the stiff feathers of which it is composed doubtless serve as a shield in the fray, as does also the hard warty skin of the face. Both serve admirably to protect the bird from the thrusts of its antagonist. Ruffs congregate at the "hills," as they are termed, daily, until the mating season has passed ; the strongest and most vigorous birds appropriating the greatest number of Reeves. The males take no interest in the nest or the young ; upon the Reeves all family duties fall. She selects some dry spot in the marshes and makes a slight nest of bits of withered herbage. Here she lays her four eggs, greenish gray in ground colour, spotted and blotched with reddish brown and gray. Ruffs prefer the marshes to the coast, and their food is composed of insects, worms, and mollusks. The Ruff becomes gregarious in winter.

The BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa melanura*) formerly used to breed in this district, but is now completely exterminated, although it is occasion-

ally seen in what were once its accustomed haunts, during its passage to and from more northern breeding-grounds. It appears as if all the descendants of these Godwits that used to breed here are gone, and the birds that pass in spring are those which have wandered a little too far to the westward in their northern flight. The nearly black tail, white wing-bar, and recurved bill are distinguishing characteristics of this species. Its note also is remarkable, a shrill, far-sounding *tii-it*.

Widely
distributed.

The commonest species of Wader upon the Broads is the REDSHANK (*Totanus calidris*). We have already noticed him on the wild northern moors, whither he also retires to rear his young, and now we will glance more fully at his habits during that interesting period. We shall also have cause to notice him yet once again when our rambles take us along the shore. The Redshank, like most other birds of this order, changes its ground with the season; thus in spring it quits the mud-bound coasts and retires to the moors and marshes to breed. Here, in the district of the Broads, as soon as signs of returning spring appear, the Redshank comes. We may soon know that the birds are back again, for they are noisy and wary enough, rising from the marshes as soon as we set foot upon their haunt, and as they are remarkably social birds, even during the breeding season, numbers may be seen careering about the air uttering their expressive double note of *ti-ik, ti-ik*. Few birds look prettier or daintier as they stand upon the little hillocks on their long slender orange-coloured legs, or run to and fro round the clear pools or even along the walls

and fences, just as we noticed the Common Sandpiper doing. More interesting still are the love flights of the male birds. Sometimes they start from a perching-place, or a wall, or even a tree, and go fluttering higher and higher in the air, then descend with wings and tail expanded, all the time uttering a loud and by no means unmusical trill. The nesting season begins in April. Several nests may not unfrequently be found on a comparatively small area of marsh or moor. Amongst the coarse grass, the rush-tufts, and other vegetation of her haunt the female scrapes a little hollow, and lines it with a few scraps of the dry herbage around. In this rude nest she lays her four eggs, pale buff in ground colour, richly and boldly blotched and spotted with dark brown, lighter brown, and gray. Most of the markings are on the larger end. The young birds and their parents keep much together until their departure for the coast. Insects, larvæ, and small worms are the Redshank's principal food during its summer sojourn on the marshes and the moors.

Formerly the BITTERN (*Botaurus stellaris*) used to breed commonly enough in this district; now it is only known as a visitor, and chiefly in winter. I came across an old coloured print the other day, entitled "Bittern Shooting," in which two sportsmen, with their dogs and flint fowling-pieces, were shown amongst the fens, with portraits of dead Bitterns beside them at their feet, and representations of several live Bitterns in the air. "Ah," I mused, "poor *Botaurus* was evidently common then; yet how different are his fortunes now! Would that we could restore him

to his fens again!" The LITTLE BITTERN (*Ardetta minuta*), although perhaps never so common as the preceding species, once appeared to breed in the fens, and when we remember how skulking a little creature it is, may even do so at the present time. Its nest is made upon the ground, and the white eggs may easily be identified by any observer fortunate enough to fall in with the prize. The upper plumage of the Little Bittern is black with a greenish tinge in the male, brown in the female; the underparts are buff.

As may naturally be inferred, this wilderness of swamp, and marsh, and reeds is a paradise for the Rails. Not counting the Land Rail, three species of these birds have their stronghold in the Broads. The commonest of these is the WATER RAIL (*Rallus aquaticus*). Although this bird may be met with in many other places—in fact in all marshes and swamps suited to its requirements—there is no district where it is so universally distributed as in the Fens. In winter it becomes more local, for many of its summer haunts do not afford sufficient shelter at that season, when the rushes wither and the flags die down. The Water Rail is a skulking bird, and is rarely surprised far from the cover of the reeds. When it does come out for any great distance it is during the night, a period, by the way, that is invariably selected for its journeys across country too. Perhaps you may hear it drop into the water from the bank with a muffled splash. The Water Rail has been seen and been watching you intently, although you have failed to observe it; and as you have approached its hiding-place it has popped into the friendly

Widely
distributed.

water, and diving under the surface, has quickly made its way to the adjoining thicket of reeds and rushes. The Water Rail becomes unusually active at dusk, especially in places where it is liable to much disturbance during the day. Then in the darkening twilight you may stand concealed behind the friendly bulwark of rushes, and watch it swim out from its reedy fastness and cross the more open water, or even step ashore and search among the wet grass for food. At these times, too, it takes advantage of the darkness to go for a spell into the air, and you may trace its hidden movements across the night sky by its grating call-note, uttered at intervals—a shrill *crrrick*. The same habit of flying about at night has been already noticed in the Moorhen. Whatever be the cause of these nocturnal peregrinations, they are most remarkable and interesting, and, so far as I am aware, no naturalist has ever suggested any probable explanation of them. The Water Rail is a most solitary bird, very different in this respect from the Moorhen; and I do not remember ever seeing more than a pair together, or even in the same part of the marsh. The food of this shy, retiring species is largely composed of beetles, worms, snails, and mollusks, and in winter, when these are apt to be scarce, they are supplemented by seeds and the buds and leaves of aquatic plants. The Water Rail's breeding season begins in April, and fresh eggs of this bird may be found all through May. The nest is made amongst the reeds and rushes or the tangled grass at the water's edge, and is most difficult to find. We may far more often stumble across it when least expecting such a prize than

when the most persistent and systematic search has been employed. The bird rarely contributes towards its discovery ; she sits lightly, and is off the moment that her quick ear detects advancing enemies, although I have never known her to cover the eggs before leaving them. The nest is made of the materials nearest to hand—the stems and leaves of the rushes and reeds, dry grass, and weeds. The eggs are six or seven in number, like those of the Land Rail, only the spots are more clearly defined. The black chicks take to the water at once, and follow their parents about the pool and through the vegetation. The Water Rail is brown, spotted with black above, the underparts slate-gray, darkest on the flanks, which are barred with white, and the longest under tail coverts are also white.

Widely
distributed.

In very similar localities, although much more locally, we may come across the SPOTTED CRAKE (*Crex porzana*). It is smaller than the Water Rail, but very similar in appearance, although readily distinguished by its white spotted upper plumage. There is little difference between the habits of the two birds or the nature of their haunts. What suits one bird is equally well adapted to the requirements of the other. The Spotted Crake is just as skulking, just as shy, just as fond of hiding at the least alarm. It also feeds on similar matter. The nest is difficult to find, especially by one unaccustomed to the task, and is built in very similar situations to those selected by the Water Rail and of much the same materials. The eggs, however, seven or eight in number, are very different. They are similar in ground colour, but the spots are large, darker in

colour, and very distinctly defined. Another peculiarity is the greenish tinge of the interior of the shell when held up to the light and viewed through the hole through which they have been blown. Like the Water Rail this bird is a resident, but its numbers are decreased in winter, or appear to be.

Very similar in general appearance to the Spotted Crake, though much smaller, BAILLON'S Cambridge and Norfolk. Very accidental elsewhere. CRAKE (*C. bailloni*) is also a resident in the fens and broads. Its habits closely resemble those of its larger ally, but the bird is sometimes met with near much smaller sheets of water. It not only swims and dives well, but is capable of flying quickly enough, if in a somewhat laboured manner. Like the other Crakes it is shy and retiring in disposition, and is rarely discovered far from the cover of rushes and reeds. Its nest is placed in much the same situations, and is made of similar materials. The eggs are from five to eight in number, almost equally pointed at either end, buff in ground colour, clouded and mottled with olive-brown and gray. Baillon's Crake feeds on similar substances to those eaten by its larger congener. The note of this bird is an oft-repeated *kik*.

The Broad's are also the great stronghold of the GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*). Widely but locally distributed in England, Wales, and Ireland. Not known to breed in Scotland. Like most big birds, especially if much persecuted, it is a shy one, but is more gregariously inclined than its smaller ally. We never find it on such small pools as often content the Little Grebe; its preference is for the larger lakes, where, swimming in the open, it may readily detect the approach of danger. In many of its habits and its actions it resembles its congeners. From all

of these it may readily be distinguished by its large size—it is the largest of its family, measuring nearly two feet in length—and in summer the black ear-tufts, and the chestnut margined with black tippet or hood, are additional and very notable characteristics. The Great Crested Grebe builds a bulky nest—often a floating structure moored to the reeds—made of dead and rotting aquatic vegetation of all kinds, the drier and finer materials being reserved for the lining. The five eggs are, so far as colour is concerned, exactly similar to those of the other Grebes, bluish white; but their much larger size prevents any confusion. They soon become soiled by contact with the nest and the wet feet and plumage of the parents. The three other species of Grebes that are included in our avifauna are only known as winter visitors to our islands. They are the RED-NECKED GREBE (*P. rubricollis*), length sixteen inches; the SCLAVONIAN GREBE (*P. cornutus*), length thirteen inches. This latter species is a little more widely dispersed, frequenting the Hebrides, the coasts of Ireland, and the south coast of England, as well as the districts visited by the preceding bird. Lastly, the BLACK-NECKED GREBE (*P. nigricollis*), length about the same as the last, perhaps a trifle smaller, and remarkable for having white on the primaries as well as the secondaries, and the bill recurved. Although very distinct in their breeding or nuptial plumage, the two latter birds are apt to be confused in their winter dress; but the points of distinction here given are always sufficient rightly to determine them. The Black-necked Grebe is perhaps most frequently observed

East coasts
of Great
Britain.

Chiefly east
and south
coasts of
England.
Very
accidental
elsewhere.

in our islands during its spring and autumn migrations, although it occurs in winter too.

A ramble over the Broads is a fitting opportunity to glance at the breeding habits of the BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*). This exquisitely beautiful bird, readily identified in spring by its sooty black head, and at all seasons by its coral red legs and feet and white primaries, tipped and margined on the inner web, and generally on the outer web with black, is one of the most gregarious of the Gulls, and returns yearly to certain favoured spots to rear its young. It is also the most inland species of the Gull tribe, and may be seen in the fields like Rooks, following the plough or even perched on the trees in the hedges near. It is an early breeder, returning to the usual nesting-grounds at the beginning of April, and the eggs are laid during the latter part of that month and the first half of May. A marshy piece of ground, even if fairly well timbered, or a low island in the centre of a pool, is a favourite situation. Many of the nests are little more than hollows amongst the herbage, but others are better made of withered, broken reeds and rushes, and coarse grass. The eggs are three or four in number, and vary considerably in colour, ranging from rich brown to pale bluish green in ground, spotted and blotched with different shades of darker brown and gray. Vast numbers of the eggs are taken for food from most of the important gulleries, the poor birds patiently submitting to repeated loss. It is absolutely impossible to convey even a faint idea of the stirring scenes

Widely distributed, especially in Ireland and Scotland, and England north of York.

to be witnessed at these breeding-places. The Gulls in noisy clouds fill the air like a snowstorm—Gulls, Gulls, Gulls are everywhere—high up in the air, wheeling round and round just above our heads in fluttering hosts, swimming on the water near us, or standing on the ground almost at our feet. As soon as the young are reared, which is by the middle or end of July, the birds quit their breeding-stations, and for the remainder of the year this Gull leads a nomad kind of life along the coast and at sea. Its usual food during spring and summer is worms, grubs, frogs, newly sown grain, and small fish; but at other times, fish, crustaceans, and the garbage of the shore and the sea form its sustenance.

The birds here noticed in detail are the most characteristic of the Broads, although, as we have remarked, some of them may be met with in suitable haunts elsewhere; whilst, on the other hand, this district is frequented by a host of other species whose more usual home is among scenery of quite a different character. It is my endeavour in these rambles to introduce to the reader such birds as are most characteristic of the country through which he walks. Throughout the Broads and Fens, therefore, he will meet with many other birds we have already noted, or are about to note in rambles yet to follow, so that a casual allusion to them will be sufficient to make the sketch of bird life in the Broads fairly complete. To pass them by in silence would be like leaving out the details of our picture.

In summer no wanderer after birds across the Broads will fail to meet with the REED WARBLER singing lustily from the thickets. All night long

he and the SEDGE WARBLER make this district melodious with their incessant warblings. And then from early dawn to the twilight hour the CUCKOO in the spring and early summer shouts his name to the marshy wilderness, and may be seen flying from one pollard willow-tree to another, often in chase of his mate, or the centre of a crowd of mobbing, angry small birds. The REED BUNTING and the SKYLARK will also be there, the latter soaring to the clouds with wild enchanting song, distributing a shower of tuneful music throughout the blue dome of heaven, and far and wide across the wilderness of swampy meadow around us. Vying with him in song flights if not in song are the SNIPES, here, there, and everywhere rising and falling, bleating and trilling their love music to their mates on the marshes below. The LAPWINGS are common enough, and may be seen tossing themselves about the air, utterly regardless of all laws of gravity, and sure sign that some danger threatens. The *crake-crake* of the LAND RAIL, now loud and near, now low and far, is at times the most persistent bird note here. MOORHENS and COOTS swim to and fro in all the reed and rush-fringed pools; they are everywhere, giving the touch of life to still, clear waters and grassy banks, whilst half-tame SWANS ornament the larger pools and slow-running rivers with their snow-white grace. Several species of DUCKS may from time to time be seen—we have noted them in detail in our ramble by lakes and streams—swimming in and out of the thickets, or rocking up and down on the open meres, far out from shore, where the summer breeze plays across the unsheltered surface.

Then in winter-time when the remnants of the reed thickets are standing rustling in the wind, their long yellow stems and ribbon-like leaves rubbing together in mournful cadence, a new army of birds descends from more northern regions to find the open water on which their very life depends. Gone are the REED WARBLERS and the CUCKOO; the SKYLARKS are silent and mostly away on fields and stubbles; the LAND RAIL has betaken himself to Africa; but DUCKS are commoner; and great gatherings of COOTS are there; as well as many a rare and local bird from across the northern seas, dropped down hap-hazard in their wanderings, tempted to settle here for a season until warmer days return. Then, again, especially during the seasons of migration, many birds pass over them on their way north or south to other haunts.

Widely
distributed.

The smaller swamps are perhaps most interesting during the winter months; for then the JACK SNIPE (*Scolopax gallinula*) haunts them. This bird does not breed within the British Islands, for they are all too temperate for its needs. It rears its young on the Arctic tundras, although returning with astounding regularity to a favourite winter corner in this country. It skulks close among the herbage, and when flushed dashes off in a peculiar erratic manner; but no matter how much it is disturbed, it soon contrives to slip back unnoticed to its favourite haunt. The COMMON SNIPE frequents the swamps at this season too; and we may often notice, especially during a long spell of hard weather, many other birds that are rarely seen near them at any other time. REDWINGS, BLACK GAME, ROOKS, LAP-

WINGS, STARLINGS, may be instanced as a few of these.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Bearded Reedling . . .	Resident	Sharp <i>ping-ping</i>	Head slate-gray, rufous-brown above, rufous and pink below
Short-eared Owl	Resident	Harsh scream	Dark buff, streaked and barred with dark brown
Marsh Harrier.	Partial resident	Clear <i>pitz-pitz</i>	Head and nape white streaked with brown, reddish brown above, chestnut-brown below
Ruff	April to September	Low <i>wick</i> , but remarkably silent species	Colours of Ruff very varied, ranging through every shade and mixture of white, chestnut, and black. Brown, black, and chestnut above, belly and under tail coverts white, wings and tail brown
Black-tailed Godwit . .	On migration: April, May; August, September	Clear <i>tii-it</i> ; alarm-note, <i>tyü</i> , oft repeated	Brown and chestnut above, rump white, chestnut and white below, a white wing-bar, tail black
Redshank . .	Resident	Loud <i>tyü</i> ; alarm-note, <i>ti-ik</i>	Brown above (except rump, which is white), barred and spotted with gray; white below, streaked with brown (except centre of belly); wings parti-coloured; tail white barred with brown
Bittern . . .	Accidental straggler	Hoarse <i>ca-wak</i> ; love-call, characteristic boom	Buff and black
Water Rail. .	Resident	Clear <i>whit</i> , shrill <i>crrrick</i>	Buffish brown and black above, slate-gray below
Spotted Crake	Resident	Clear <i>whit</i> , shrill <i>crrrick</i>	Dark brown spotted with white above, slate-gray and white below

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Baillon's Crake	Resident	Oft-repeated <i>kik</i>	Dark brown streaked with white above, below slate-gray
Great Crested Grebe . .	Resident	Loud <i>kek</i> , oft repeated	Brown above, white below, tippet black and chestnut, crests or "horns" brown
Black-headed Gull . . .	Resident	Shrill <i>crick, kah</i> , and often <i>kree-ah</i>	French gray and white above, white below, with rosy tinge on breast, head sooty black in summer
Jack Snipe . .	October to March	Remarkably silent during residence in this country	Brown and yellow glossed with green and purple above, buffish white below, barred (except on belly) with brown

RAMBLE X.

ALONG ROCK-BOUND COASTS.

ONCE more with our change of scene the birds of our rambles are different. To-day we will wander along the rock-bound coasts; those mighty bulwarks that rear their stately sea-washed walls in majesty, and offer a harbour and a resting-place to many interesting species. Not only are the lofty cliffs the haunt of birds, but the caves within them, tunnelled out by centuries of ceaseless sea-wash, and the rocky islands separated from the mainland by the waters' wear and tear, are the favourite homes of more. The rambler by the sea will be charmed by the glimpses of bird life that are constantly greeting him, as he gets fitful glances at the face of the cliffs, especially if he visits these places between the months of May and August. Indeed, the rock-bound coasts are only seen at their best, so far as bird life is concerned, during summer. At all other seasons they are comparatively deserted; for they are only the nurseries of the great majority of the birds that frequent them.

Amongst so many things of interest, it is difficult to convey within the narrow limits of these pages even a tithe of their charm. One

feels the task is almost hopeless, if we are to do justice to all; and utterly bewildered by the stirring sights before us, we feel inclined to put down the pen in despair. We might say so much about each, had we the space and the time; for they are old, old friends whose habits and whose ways for twenty years and more have been a source of unalloyed pleasure and gratification. Perhaps it may be best to deal first with the one or two species of land-birds that dwell upon these rocky coasts. One of the most interesting of these is the PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*), the only species of the larger Falcons (*Falco* and *Hierofalco*) that breeds within the confines of the British Islands. The Peregrine is far from being a common bird, although a pair may be found breeding in most of the big bird-cliffs, especially in the northern districts. For dash and boldness the Peregrine stands unrivalled. His food consists of such birds as Puffins, Ducks, Plovers, and Pigeons; and these he flies down in a way so brilliant and daring as ever to win our admiration, in spite of its being tinged with regret at the death of our favourites. Many and many a time have I seen the sea-birds on some lofty cliff thrown into commotion by the swoop of this Falcon, as, like an arrow from a bow, he has hurled himself among the fluttering hosts and borne away his victim before the uproar has actually commenced. Any observer of birds, I doubt not, can furnish instances of this bold freebooter's audacity. I am of opinion that the Peregrine pairs for life; and year after year the same cliffs will contain the nest. This is generally built on a shelf or in a crevice in the least

Widely
distributed,
but very
local in
England.

accessible part, often where the rocks overhang. The female sits lightly, and quits her eggs almost as soon as we reach the summit of the cliffs. Perhaps she is warned of our approach by the ever-watchful male, either soaring high in air above her, or seated on some neighbouring rock pinnacle which commands a view of the nest. As a rule, Peregrines are remarkably silent, but when their nest is threatened by human intruders they set up an incessant chattering cry, and fly to and fro past the face of the cliff, or wheel about in the air above it. Cool of head and lithe of limb must be the man who essays to reach the home of the Peregrine when made in an ocean cliff. The nest is scanty, often nothing but a mere hollow in the soil, sometimes lined with a few bits of dry grass and sea campion, and perchance one or two feathers from the dead birds conveyed thither; indeed, the bones and other remnants of the Peregrine's victims strew the place if it is big enough to hold them. The three or four eggs are usually laid in May and do not differ in any respect save size from those of the Kestrel. Every variation seen in the one may be remarked in the other. The young are kept well supplied with food, more being taken than they can eat; but as soon as they can fly all parental care ceases and they quit their birthplace for ever. The Peregrine has the upper parts dark gray, the head and moustachial lines are black, the underparts are buffish white, spotted on the throat and breast, and barred on the remainder with blackish brown.

In one or two favoured districts, especially on the wild, rocky coast of Wales, the nest of the COMMON BUZZARD may be found; and in most

ocean cliffs the JACKDAW has its residence ; but as we have already dealt with both these species no more than a passing notice is necessary.

All rocky
coasts.

On almost all parts of the rocky coast, either where cliffs abound, or the beach is strewn with boulders, as well as on most of the rough islands, we shall be sure to meet with the ROCK PIPIT (*Anthus obscurus*). It is the only small Passerine bird of the shore, and seldom or never found in any other localities. All the autumn and winter it is more or less gregarious, but in spring it separates into pairs ; and then we may hear the simple song of the male as he flies up into the air a little way in true Pipit style. Sometimes he sits and sings on the rocks upon the beach, sometimes when perched high up the dizzy cliffs. In summer the food of the Rock Pipit is largely composed of insects and tiny worms, but chiefly of seeds during the remainder of the year. Small as this bird is, it is sure to intrude upon your notice as you stroll along the beach below the rocks. It flits from the cliffs, uttering its plaintive *weet*, and settles again a little further on, or rises into the air, and after several uncertain movements either takes refuge high up the precipice or makes a detour across the water to its original starting-place. The Rock Pipit pairs early, but nesting duties do not become very general with this species until May. The nest is difficult enough to find, being hidden under stones and in crevices of the rocks, or even in holes and amongst fallen cliff. It is made of dry grass, moss, bits of seaweed, and wherever possible is lined with hair. As this material is not always to be had, fine grass is then used as

a substitute. The four or five eggs are dull bluish white in ground colour, profusely mottled with grayish or reddish brown, and sometimes sparingly streaked with darker brown. Rarely is more than one brood reared in the year, and young and old often keep together all through the autumn. The Rock Pipit has the upper parts olive-brown, streaked with darker brown, a pale eyestripe, and the underparts below the white throat are sandy buff (darkest on the breast, and shading into olive on the flanks) streaked except on the belly with brown. The light patch on the outermost tail feathers is smoke-brown.

Our next species unfortunately is fast becoming a rare bird. No bird that breeds on the rock-bound coasts is now more locally dispersed than the CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*). This pretty bird is distinguished by his glossy black plumage and curved red bill. The orbits of the eyes, as well as the legs and toes, are also red, but these peculiarities are not so readily observed. At one time, it may be remarked, the Chough frequented inland cliffs, but these have long been deserted for the ocean rocks. I am of opinion that the Jackdaw has done more to exterminate the Chough than anything else, not even excepting man. Times have prospered with the pert, lively, quarrelsome Jackdaw; and he has succeeded in ousting his more peaceable neighbour, not only from the country cliffs, but even the sea-girt rocks whither he has followed it. The British colonies of Choughs are few and far between. I personally know of one or two, but forbear to mention their exact location for reasons which I am sure the reader who loves birds will appreciate. In its

Locally
round
British
coasts as far
north as
Skye.

flight and in many of its habits the Chough resembles the Jackdaw, and its cackling note is also very similar. The Chough comes inland to feed, and may then be seen following the plough and digging up the newly sown grain, running to and fro, and occasionally flying a little way from one part of the field to another. The food of the Chough is composed of insects, worms, and grain, and of various substances found upon the beach, where the bird sometimes alights. The Chough breeds in May, making its nest in crevices and holes in the cliffs, in situations often quite inaccessible to man. The nest is made of sticks, turf, and dry grass, and lined with wool, and occasionally with hair. The eggs are from four to six in number, varying from bluish or greenish white to pale creamy buff in ground colour, spotted and blotched with light and dark brown and gray.

Widely
distributed,
but very
local in
England.

It is also on the sea-cliffs that the nest of the RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) may now almost only be found. Few and far between are the Ravens' nests round English coasts; but in Scotland, especially in the north, this handsome bird is still common, and may be met with in a great variety of scenery, both inland, on the mountain sheep-farms, and on the coast. Its habits are very similar to those of the Carrion Crow. It is constantly prying about in quest of plunder, and as its food consists pretty well of every living creature it can overpower or capture, it may be met with almost everywhere. At all seasons it appears to be socially inclined, yet not what we can call gregarious. The Raven is an early breeder, and one which undoubtedly pairs for

life, so that the old nest is used season by season, being patched up and renovated each spring. The nest is often made in March—sometimes not until the end of April. It is placed upon a shelf of the rocks, not always in a very inaccessible place, and is made of sticks cemented with turfs, and lined with grass, roots, and wool; sometimes the lining is of moss and wool. The eggs are from four to six in number, exactly resembling those of the Rook in colour, but nearly twice the size. The note of the Raven is a hoarse *pruck*, which becomes more musical in spring or when the birds are paying court to their mates. The large size is sufficient to identify the Raven, otherwise it resembles the Carrion Crow in appearance, but the feathers on the throat are elongated into hackles.

With a brief notice of the ROCK DOVE All rocky coasts. (*Columba livia*) the list of land-birds frequenting the rocks will be brought to a close. One of the most interesting facts attached to this bird is that it is the original stock from which the domestic Dove has been derived. Rarely or never does the Rock Dove perch in trees; it loves to nestle in the ocean cliffs and caves, dashing out with impetuous haste as our boat approaches, and doubling quickly is soon lost to view over the top of the cliffs. Rock Doves are gregarious all the year round, and the colonies are large or small, compact or scattered, according to the nature of the haunts they frequent. This bird is capable of fast and long-continued flight, and often goes for miles to feed. Its note is a rich, full *coo*, variously modulated when the bird is under sexual excitement; but as is the case with

other members of this family, it is rarely heard out of the breeding season. The Rock Dove is an early breeder, and continues to rear brood after brood all the summer through. April, May, and June, however, are the busiest months. A shelf in a cave is selected by preference, but if this cannot be had, crannies and clefts in the cliffs are used as nesting-places. The nest is slight enough—a few sticks and straws, a scrap or two of dry grass, or a few bits of seaweed are raked together, and the two eggs are pure white. The Rock Dove obtains most of its food on the pastures and ground near the cliffs, sometimes visiting farms several miles inland. This is composed of grain, seeds, and the shoots of herbage. The white lower back and rump, and the two conspicuous black wing-bars, distinguish this species. The STOCK DOVE may also be met with round many rocky coasts.

Most rocky
coasts.

We now arrive at the more legitimate dwellers of the rocks—the birds that have their home upon the wide and open sea, and which only come to land to rear their offspring, crowding in tens of thousands to certain favoured cliffs. The greatest rock-birds are the very distinct little family of AUKS (*Alcidæ*). Of these the two best known species are probably the GUILLEMOT (*Alca troile*) and the RAZORBILL (*A. torda*). Both these birds are eminently gregarious, and especially so during the breeding season. Both birds are similar in appearance, although the upper plumage of the Guillemot is browner in shade, and the broad bill of the Razorbill, with its white stripe across the centre, is very different from the long, thin, and pointed bill of

the Guillemot. Between the months of May and August the rocks where these birds most do congregate present a busy scene, and the sea below swarms with birds, which are constantly going to and returning from the ledges of the cliffs. Both birds are past masters of the art of diving, and both chase the small fish and crustaceans on which they chiefly feed with deadly skill. They sit high and lightly on the water just like Ducks, and dive with the rapidity of thought. Very often towards the close of the summer days, strings of Razorbills and Guillemots may be seen flying swiftly along just above the waves to their distant colony. They have been miles away to the spot where the shoals of fry have congregated near the surface, and now they are going home. Neither of these birds is shy, and both will allow your boat to pass within a few yards; but very often their timidity gets the better of them, and they plunge beneath the green waves to appear again at a safer distance. Singularly enough these two birds, whose other habits are so much alike, differ considerably in the matter of their domestic arrangements, although neither of them makes any nest. The Guillemot frequents the ledges of the cliffs, the little prominences, and the flat tops of the pinnacle-shaped rocks. Here it lays its single, big, pear-shaped egg, exposed to the gaze of every one who climbs along or is lowered down the face of the cliffs. In spite of what we read to the contrary, the Guillemot generally manages to select some little inequality on the shelf, some little hollow where her egg is not easily toppled over. It would be vain

to attempt to describe the infinite variations of colour and markings displayed on the shell of the Guillemot's egg—greens, browns, buffs, blues, and whites of every shade represent the ground colours; browns, grays, and pinks of equal diversity the markings. In shape these markings are as diversified as in colour—streaks, spots, blotches, pencilled lines, and irregular masses, all occurring in delightful variety. The Razor-bill, on the other hand, requires a cranny or a hole in the broken cliffs in which to deposit her egg, where it is usually well concealed from view. I have known it laid in a hole in the ground. Although nothing near the amount of variation is to be seen in the eggs of this species, they exhibit considerable diversity. The ground colour varies to every shade between white and brown, and the very bold and decided blotches and spots from dark liver-brown to grayish brown. It is a curious fact that no green of any shade is ever seen on the Razorbill's eggs, but when held up to the light the inside of the shell is a beautiful pea-green. Both species only rear one young bird each season, but they will lay several eggs in succession if they are removed. Vast numbers of these eggs are gathered for food, especially at St. Kilda. I have here seen the men, when they chanced to get to a part of the cliff where eggs were unusually abundant, take off their coats and fill the sleeves with the spoil—nay, more, they have even divested themselves of their nether garments and turned them into temporary sacks, rather than leave the harvest behind. Fortunately St. Kilda is an out-of-the-way place,

and the feelings of no prying tourist are ever shocked at such primitive simplicity.

Our two other species of Auk are the BLACK GUILLEMOT (*A. grylle*), distinguished in summer by its black body plumage, glossed with green, and its white wing coverts; and the PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica*). The first of these birds is the most local of the group; and the most important particular in which its habits differ from the Common Guillemot is the fact of its breeding in holes and crannies of the cliffs, sometimes even at a distance from the sea, and laying two eggs. These are white or pale green in ground colour, blotched and spotted with various shades of brown and gray. The Black Guillemot is nothing near so gregarious as its allies, and it is generally dispersed sparingly along the coast—a few pairs here and there in suitable spots. The fry of fish, crustaceans, and small shell-fish are the food of the Black Guillemot. This bird may often be seen fishing close inshore, even in sea-lochs, and braves even the roughest waves in quest of its finny prey. It dives and swims with equal grace, and rarely uses its wings, except to visit its rocky home. One never sees the water thickly studded with these birds.

North and west of Scotland, north of Ireland.

Most numerous on rocky coasts.

Very different, however, in this respect is the Puffin. There is no more gregarious bird along the rocky coast than he, and a visit to his colony is a treat indeed to the lover of animated nature. He cannot be mistaken for any other species, his big brightly coloured beak and comical facial expression making him the most peculiar bird along the rock-bound coasts. In the colour of his plumage he is something like the Razorbill, only

his throat is white at all seasons, that bird's only in winter. Throughout the autumn and winter the Puffin is not seen much near the land, but in spring they congregate at the old accustomed haunts, coming from the surrounding sea with marked regularity. The date of their arrival varies a good deal with the locality, sometimes being as early as March, at others not before the beginning of May. For miles around a Puffin colony the sea is studded with birds, swimming and diving, and flying to and fro. But the great centre of interest is ashore, either on the low rock-bound islands or the cliffs. At some of these Puffin colonies the visitor is apt to feel disappointed at first, because scarcely a bird is to be seen ; but at others the stirring sight frustrates all attempts to describe it. This is because the Puffin makes its nest in a hole in the ground, just like a rabbit burrow, either in the soft earth near the top, or on the sloping downs among the cliffs, or yet again in the peaty soil that covers the rocky islets (as at the Fernes), or on the bare sloping hillsides (as at St. Kilda). Now in some places all the birds are hidden away underground, and do not leave their burrows until pulled out by the hand ; yet in others, especially when on the cliffs and downs, they appear to sit more at the entrance of their holes, and immediately take wing when you approach, sweeping down to the sea in a bewildering, silent multitude. The Puffin generally excavates its own burrow, using its sharp claws to bore into the ground, throwing out the loose soil behind it as it goes. Several feet or sometimes several yards from the entrance a slight nest of dry grass and perhaps a

feather or two is formed. In this the female deposits her single egg, which is dirty white in ground colour, very faintly spotted and blotched with brown and gray. But one nestling is reared; and as soon as the young are able to fly the great colony begin to desert the land and betake themselves to the sea for the remainder of the year. The food of the Puffin is fish, especially sprats, and the fry of the herring, small crabs, and crustaceans.

From the Auks it is an easy step to the LARIDÆ, or Gulls. Five species of these graceful, charming birds have their summer haunts along the rock-bound coasts. Most closely associated of them all with the cliffs is the KITTIWAKE (*Larus tridactylus*). The other species breed indiscriminately on low, rocky islands, as well as on ocean cliffs, but the pretty Kittiwake is never known to make its nest on any but the steepest and most inaccessible precipices. Two things enable you to identify this Gull with ease. The first is its rock-haunting habits, and the second is its unmistakable note, which resembles the sound of its own name—thus, *kitty-a-ake*, which by a slight stretch of the imagination may be likened to the words, *ah-get-away, get-a-way*. The Kittiwake, as is the case with nearly all the Gulls, in fact, is a gregarious bird, and numbers make their nests together on the face of the same cliff. What is also of even greater interest is the fact that it probably pairs for life, and uses the same nest yearly, provided the wintry storms have not destroyed it. The Kittiwakes nest much lower down the cliffs than the Guillemots, and often in places where nothing but a bird

On most
rocky coasts,
especially in
north.

could ever get or keep a foothold. Here, on the narrow ledges and on the little projections far down the awful depths, you may see the birds at their nests, standing on them, or fluttering along past the face of the cliff, in places enough to terrify the most intrepid human climber. These nests are made of turf with the soil and roots still clinging to them, which the salt spray and wet feet of the birds soon turn into a mortar-like mass; then seaweed and stalks of plants are used, and the whole is lined with fine, dry grass, and perhaps a few odd feathers from the parent's plumage. The droppings from the birds soon whitewash the whole, as well as the rocks all round it. The eggs are three or four in number, bluish green or yellowish or olive-brown in ground colour, spotted and blotched with dark and light brown and gray. The moment their homes are threatened, the Kittiwakes set up a noisy clamour, rising here, there, and everywhere from the face of the cliffs in fluttering hosts, drifting to and fro in anxious alarm. As soon as the young can fly the rocks are deserted, and for the remainder of the year the Kittiwake spends most of its time at sea. The food of this Gull is fish, crustaceans, shell-fish, and almost any refuse floating on the water.

Rocky
coasts,
especially in
north.

Next to the Kittiwake the GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*L. marinus*) is certainly the most rock-haunting species. At the same time it is one of the most local of the Gulls besides being the largest. It is also much less gregarious, and is more inclined to breed in scattered pairs in the least frequented parts of the coast. It makes its bulky nest in early summer upon the top of some

isolated stack of rocks, or on a ledge in the highest cliffs. Usually this nest is slight, sometimes nothing but a mere hollow lined with a few bits of dry grass. The eggs are two or three in number, olive-brown, or light brown in ground colour, spotted with various shades of darker brown and gray. The large size, and very dark slate-gray mantle, serve to distinguish this handsome bird from its smaller congener, the LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*L. fuscus*). Very different are the habits of these two birds, especially during the season of reproduction. The Lesser Black-backed Gull is eminently gregarious and social, and wherever facilities are afforded great numbers breed in company. Wherever it is possible, this fine bird prefers a rocky island to the mainland, and the uneven surface of the ground in such localities seems always to be selected rather than shelves of the cliffs. In many places, however, the birds have no choice—as at St. Kilda—and are forced to breed among the highest inaccessible cliffs among the Guillemots and Razorbills. Like its larger ally, the flat grassy top of a rock-stack standing alone in the sea is sometimes selected. The most extensive colony of Lesser Black-backed Gulls that I know of is at the Ferne Islands—there this Gull is the one predominating species. Its nest may be found almost anywhere on these far-famed islets; among the luxuriant carpet of sea campion and coarse grass, on the ledges of the low rocks which on all sides stand out from the peaty soil, in the hollows among the Puffin burrows, and wedged tightly in the rock crevices where the Eiders nest. The

Widely
distributed.
Not known
to breed
below
Ferne
south to
Devon.

materials of which it is composed vary a good deal in quantity and description, according to the district. Thus many nests are made of leaves and stalks of sea campion, lined with grass; others are almost entirely constructed of turf and grass; others, yet again, are made externally of heather branches, bits of seaweed, and lined with grass. All, however, are somewhat poorly made, and in many instances a mere hollow in the turf is the only provision for the eggs. This Gull lays three or four eggs, which vary in colour almost as much as those of the Guillemot. The ground colours are pale green, bluish white, browns of various shades, buff, and gray, and the spots and blotches vary from dark liver-brown to pale olive-brown and gray. It should here be remarked that colonies of both this Gull and the Great Black-backed Gull are sometimes established on islands in lochs at some distance from the open sea. Only one brood is reared in the season, and as soon as the young can fly the usual wandering life is resumed, the immature birds flocking much by themselves.

Widely
distributed.

Another bird whose habits and the localities it frequents during the breeding season are very similar to the foregoing, is the HERRING GULL (*L. argentatus*). Large colonies of this bird are rare. Such may be seen in favoured parts of the high cliffs of the mainland or the grass-clothed islands, but we far more frequently come across a few pairs of birds scattered here and there along the coast. From motives of security the Herring Gull prefers an island for a breeding-place, although it readily adapts itself to circum-

stances—as a proof of which it is the most widely distributed of all the Gulls during the breeding season. The nests are precisely similar to those of the preceding species—sometimes slight, sometimes more elaborate, according to circumstances. The eggs are two or three in number, varying from pale bluish green to olive and yellowish brown, spotted with dark and light brown and gray. All these large Gulls become very clamorous when their breeding-haunts are invaded, the present species especially so. All the time you are at the nests the parents, in a dense, drifting, fluttering throng, persistently keep up a chorus of chattering notes, sounding like *ki-uk ki-uk* or *hak-hak-hak*. The Herring Gull is readily distinguished from all its larger congeners by the pale gray of its mantle.

Our last species of this group is the COMMON GULL (*L. canus*), one of the most local of the Gulls during the breeding season, and only met with then in northern and western districts. Its much smaller size serves to distinguish it from the Herring Gull, although the colour of its plumage is much the same. These birds begin to collect at their breeding-stations towards the end of April, but the nests do not contain eggs before the middle or even the end of May. Colonies of this Gull may occasionally be met with on islands in lakes some distance from the sea, as well as on the rock-stacks near the coast of the mainland; but so far as my own observations go, rocky islands in the quiet Highland sea-lochs are the favourite place of assembly during summer. Here almost every little island rock contains a pair or so, and on the biggest islands,

Locally in
Scotland
and Ireland.
Winter in
England.

those of a few acres in extent, small colonies may be met with. The nests are made on the ground, amongst the crevices of exposed rock, or in holes in the turf, and are of the slightest description—most of them little more than hollows in which a few bits of dry herbage have been collected. A few, however, are better made of heather-twigs, turf, and bits of seaweed. The three or four eggs are olive-brown of various shades, spotted and streaked with darker brown and gray. This Gull is most clamorous at the nest; its harsh note of *yak* being kept up with irritating persistency all the time of our stay. Only one brood is reared in the year.

St. Kilda.

These northern rock-bound coasts are the favoured haunt of several other interesting birds. Most local of them all is the FULMAR PETREL (*Fulmarus glacialis*), whose only great breeding-place is on the awful precipices and sloping, turf-clad cliffs of far-away St. Kilda. A ramble to St. Kilda is not to be lightly thought of; but I cannot pass the Fulmar by without a few brief words of notice. The cliffs here, from May to August, are white with birds, the air is filled with birds, numerous as snowflakes in a winter storm. All the grassy patches and slopes, all the ledges of the cliffs are crowded, packed with Fulmars' nests, every inch of available ground or rock being in most places occupied. The turf-covered cliffs are the favourite nesting-places, for this bird loves a hole in the ground, no matter however shallow, in which to deposit its single white, rough-shelled egg. But there is not grassy cliff enough for a tenth part of the birds that breed here, and the less fortunate have to be content with the

ledges and crannies of the rocks. The highest and most important cliff in the island is Connacher—a vast wall of rock falling sheer down to the Atlantic, formed by a mountain-side, twelve hundred feet high, having crumbled away before the stormy buffetings of this wide ocean during past ages. It is utterly impossible to portray the stirring scenes in this brief notice; and I must refer any reader who is sufficiently interested in the subject to my work, “Our Rarer Birds,” where he will find a full description of these famous islands and the birds that breed upon them.

Along the rocky coasts in certain favoured districts we may find the EIDER DUCK (*Somateria mollissima*) breeding in localities suited to its needs. The Eider is a thorough bird of the sea, and only comes on land for the purpose of rearing its young. In spring, parties of these birds may be met with inshore, among the little rocky creeks and fiords, and then the males are particularly noisy, paying court to the females by swimming round them, bowing their heads, and opening and closing their wings, and uttering a grunting kind of noise. Soon after this the birds separate into pairs, and by the middle of May the nests are ready for eggs. Although the Eider usually makes her nest upon the low, rocky islands in a crevice of the rocks, or even amongst the sea campion and long, coarse grass, she occasionally chooses a site on the cliffs, hundreds of feet above the water. The crevices of old ruins and the holes in tumble-down walls are also selected for nesting-places, as the visitor to the Ferne Islands will not fail to remark. The nest, made entirely by the

Hebrides,
extending to
Orkneys,
the Forth,
and Fernes.

female, is big and well made, composed of dry grass, bits of seaweed, the stalks of the sea campion and other plants, and sometimes heather branches. This is warmly lined with down from the parent's body, gradually accumulated during the time the eggs are being laid. These are six or seven in number, pale olive-green and without markings. As is usual with the Ducks, the showily attired male bird keeps away from the nest, although in the Eider Duck he joins his mate when she leaves the nest for food; and then they may be seen swimming side by side. Before leaving home the female is careful to cover her conspicuous eggs from view. The Eider Duck is very sociable during the nesting season, and in places where the birds are numerous, numbers of nests are made side by side. Where they are protected by man, these Ducks become very tame, and will allow an observer to stand and stroke them as they sit upon their nests. The young are taken to the sea soon after they are hatched. In spite of the grandmotherly criticism of the *Athenæum*, I am going to repeat my opinion that the much rarer KING EIDER DUCK (*S. spectabilis*) probably breeds within the precincts of the British Islands. For stating that I had seen this rare Duck at St. Kilda during the summer, I was accused by some wise, stay-at-home-know-everything critic attached to that paper, to put it as mildly as possible, of conscious inaccuracy. It is gratifying to record that my opinion has been shared (in a written communication) by Mr. Harvie-Brown, a gentleman who has forgotten more of the ornithology of this wild, little-known region of the Hebrides than is, or is ever likely

to be, within the knowledge of the anonymous writer of such arrant nonsense.

Another bird of these wild northern coasts is the RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*). It is not known to breed anywhere in England, occurring there as a winter visitor. This bird loves a rocky, irregular coast the best—a coast full of lochs, and creeks, and fiords. The male is one of the showiest birds of the rock-bound coast, easily identified as he sits low on the water, close inshore, by his bright red narrow bill and bushy black crest. The rambler by the waterside on these northern coasts is sure to meet with pairs of these birds swimming along just below the rocks, searching the shallows for food, or repeatedly diving in the deeper water. From time to time he may see them flying quickly along the lochs to visit the bare rocks at low water, amongst which they pick up crustaceans and little fish left in the pools on the shore. The sharply toothed bill of this bird enables it to seize the fish with deadly certainty. These fish are pursued under water in a precisely similar manner to the way in which the Guillemot and the Cormorant chase their prey. In the breeding season the Red-breasted Merganser is not what we can term gregarious, although several nests may be found within a small area of the coast. A rocky island is always selected if possible. The scanty nest is often made under the shelter of a rock, at other times amongst the coarse grass and heath that clothes these islets. It is little more than a hollow in the ground, lined with a few bits of dry grass, but down from the parent is added as the eggs are laid. These are from eight to twelve in

Widely distributed from Firth of Forth northwards; and in west of Ireland.

number, and olive-gray in colour. They are generally laid in May or early June. The much rarer GOOSANDER (*M. merganser*) breeds sparingly in the Highlands, but is not sufficiently numerous to merit more than a passing notice here. It is best known as a winter visitor to our islands, becoming least common in the south. The creamy white eggs are laid in a hollow tree.

All rocky
coasts.

Two very noteworthy birds met with on almost every rocky coast are the CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and the SHAG (*P. cristatus*). These dusky birds may often be seen flying in a heavy, laboured way across the water, or entering or leaving the caves and fissures of the cliffs. The habits of both birds are very similar. Sometimes quite a gathering of Cormorants or Shags (of the two, the latter is perhaps the most gregarious) may be seen sitting on a rock sunning themselves, and from time to time we may come across them fishing close inshore in the deep water below the cliffs. Their food is composed of fish, which they catch either by diving and pursuing them under water, or by plunging from a rock. A rocky island—as at the Fernes—or even a tree at some distance inland, but much more frequently a ledge of the cliffs is employed by the Cormorant as a nesting-site; but the Shag always prefers a cave or a rock-fissure by the sea in which to make its nest. Both species make rude, slovenly nests of sticks, dry weeds, and grass, flat in form, and usually covered with droppings and decomposing fish. The eggs of each (two or three in number) are the same in colour—a delicate green when newly laid, but thickly coated with chalk, and soon becoming

soiled and dirty. Those of the Cormorant are the largest on an average. Both birds often begin to sit as soon as the first egg is laid. It is probable that both these birds pair for life, and year by year frequent certain favoured spots, using the old nest annually. The Shag may always be distinguished from the Cormorant by its smaller size, absence of white in the plumage, and generally browner appearance. It is further characterised by having only twelve feathers in the tail, the Cormorant possessing fourteen. In the nuptial season a frontal crest of curly feathers is assumed by the Shag, but these drop off soon after the eggs are laid; at the same period the Cormorant assumes white plumes on the thighs, and white filaments on the head and neck, the latter abrading away by the time the eggs are laid, and the former during the course of the summer.

With a short notice of the GANNET (*Sula bassana*), we will bring this ramble to a close. With the exception of the breeding season this fine bird rarely comes near the land, and then only to one or two chosen localities. A visit to the breeding-place of the Gannet is a red-letter day in the experience of the lover of birds. Take the Bass for example. Here the Gannets begin breeding early in May. The nests are built everywhere among the selected cliffs, on every ledge and projection big enough to hold the bulky structures. Many nests are made amongst the fragments of rock at the top of the cliffs, others lower down in much less accessible

Scotland :
Sulisker,
Stack Island,
Bass Rock,
Ailsa,
St. Kilda.
England :
Lundy
Island ;* and
Ireland :
Bull Rock,
Cow Rock,
Little
Skellig.

* A small branch of this colony is established on an islet off the coast of Pembroke.

haunts. These nests are cone-shaped and flat, made of seaweed, turf, straw, and moss, and lined with grass. They are built so close together in many places that the sitting birds jostle each other, and fights between the overcrowded Gannets are constantly taking place. The single egg of the Gannet is bluish green when first laid, but soon loses all trace of its original colour from contact with the wet feet of the sitting bird and the dirty nest. The scene is pretty and exciting in the extreme. Clouds of white Gannets are soaring and fluttering in all directions before the cliffs, the sea below is white with more ; and all the time one incessant din of noisy cries rings like a babel in the air. These notes resemble the syllables *carra-carra*. Birds, birds, birds are everywhere : some carrying materials for their nests ; some disgorging fish by the side of their sitting mates ; some fast asleep on the grassy downs at the edge of the cliffs ; some fighting, toppling over the cliffs locked together by their bills ; some sitting quietly on their egg ; some rising up to leave their nest with the greatest reluctance as we approach—all interesting to the observer, even after repeated visits to the colony. The Gannet feeds exclusively on fish, which the bird secures by plunging down upon them from on high. This bird never dives ; all the fish it catches are near the surface, and they are always seized in the long, sharp, powerful beak. A flock of Gannets fishing in some quiet bay is one of the prettiest sights a rock-bound shore can show. The Gannet is about the size of a small Goose, nearly uniform white in colour,

except the primaries and primary coverts, which are black. The head and neck are more or less suffused with buff. As soon as the young are reared the Gannets desert the land, and for the remainder of the year become nomads of the sea.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Peregrine Falcon	Resident	Harsh chatter	Dark gray above, buffish white below, spotted and barred with blackish brown
Rock Pipit . .	Resident	Plaintive <i>weet</i> or <i>peep</i>	Olive - brown above, sandy buff below, spotted with dark brown, eyestripe pale and conspicuous
Chough . . .	Resident	Cackling note, something like that of Jackdaw	Glossy black with metallic blue and purple gloss on upper plumage; bill, legs, and feet red
Raven . . .	Resident	Hoarse <i>pruck</i>	Glossy black with blue and purple gloss
Rock Dove .	Resident	Rich full <i>coo</i>	Slate-gray above, lower back and rump white, lavender-gray below, black wing-bars very pronounced
Guillemot . .	Resident	Very silent bird; occasionally utters a low grunting sound on cliffs	Dark brown above (including neck), pure white below
Razorbill . .	Resident	Remarkably silent bird, but sometimes grunts like preceding	Black above (including throat), pure white below
Black Guillemot	Resident	Remarkably silent bird, but sometimes grunts like preceding	Black glossed with green, wings black and white, legs and feet red; in winter underparts white, and portions of upper parts mottled with same

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Puffin . . .	Resident	Remarkably silent bird; when dragged from hole sometimes utters harsh scream	Crown gray, rest of upper parts black, white below
Kittiwake . .	Resident	Loud <i>kitty-a-ake</i>	Gray and white above, white below
Great Black-backed Gull.	Resident	Loud oft-repeated <i>ag ag</i>	Dark gray and pure white above, white below
Lesser Black-backed Gull.	Resident	Persistent and oft-repeated <i>ki-uk</i> and <i>ak</i>	Dark gray and pure white above, white below
Herring Gull .	Resident	Persistent and oft-repeated <i>ki-uk</i> and <i>ak</i>	Slate-gray and white above, white below
Common Gull .	Resident	Clamorous <i>yak</i>	Slate-gray and white above, white below
Fulmar Petrel .	Resident	Silent	Slate-gray and white above, white below
Eider Duck .	Resident	Grating <i>kr</i> , harsh <i>ah-oo</i>	Head and nape black, white, and green; black and white above; scapulars and innermost secondaries white, crown black; buff and black below
King Eider Duck . . .	Rare visitor	Grating <i>kr</i> , harsh <i>ah-oo</i>	Similar to preceding, but scapulars black, crown gray, black V-shaped mark on throat meeting at chin
Red-breasted Merganser .	Resident	Harsh <i>karr karr</i>	Head and upper neck glossy black; black and white above; buff and white below; two black bars across wings
Cormorant . .	Resident	Remarkably silent, but sometimes utters harsh croak	Black glossed with purple and green
Shag . . .	Resident	Remarkably silent, but sometimes utters harsh croak	Similar to preceding, but not so metallic
Gannet . . .	Resident	Harsh <i>carra-carra</i>	White, primaries and primary coverts black

RAMBLE XI.

BY SANDY SHORES.

STILL keeping to the coasts, we will now confine our attention to a ramble across the sands and the shingly beaches. Here, according to season, vast numbers of birds may be met with, and here during the summer months a few very interesting birds have their homes. We will also visit a few of the grassy downs, those beautiful expanses of smooth, short turf of brightest green above the sea, where other and shyer fowl come to rear their young with each returning spring.

Summer and winter alike, the long, broad stretches of sandy beach that occur on most parts of the coast which have any foreshore at all, are the home of the RINGED PLOVER (*Ægialitis hiaticula*). This bird is easily recognised as it runs across the sands, often close to the receding waves, by its broad white collar, white forehead and throat, black breast and cheeks, brown upper parts and pure white underparts below the breast. In autumn and winter it is not unfrequently found where the shore is muddy, and even some considerable distance from the sea up a tidal river or near a large sheet of water; but in summer

Widely
distributed.

it loves the sand the best, and there it generally rears its young. The actions of this pretty little bird are always engaging. I could stand for hours watching it trip about the smooth, brown, wet sand, following each spent wave, and searching every inch of ground as the water recedes, picking up the sand-worms, shrimps, and tiny mollusks washed from the deep. In autumn it may be seen in flocks, but early in spring these have all disbanded, and the birds are in pairs. Yet even in the breeding season it is still very sociably inclined, and all the birds breeding on one stretch of sand may frequently be seen feeding in company. The Ringed Plover, like most shore-birds, breeds late, and its eggs are not laid before the end of May or early in June. These are generally deposited in a hollow in the fine sand, not amongst the shingle. Nest there is none, and even the hollow is often dispensed with. The eggs are four in number, creamy buff in ground colour, minutely spotted with blackish brown and gray. These eggs are only found by much patient, systematic search, as they so closely resemble the sand on which they lie, and the old birds seldom or never contribute to their discovery. The young chicks are also very difficult to see, and possess the habit of crouching close among the rougher shingle when danger threatens them. The KENTISH PLOVER (*Æ. cantianus*) here deserves passing notice. It is a migratory bird, arriving in April and leaving in September. Its habits and nesting economy are very similar to those of the preceding species. The eggs, however, are smaller, darker, and more streaky than those of the Ringed Plover. The Kentish Plover

is distinguished by having the black collar only represented by a patch on each side of the breast, and by having the back of the head and the nape buff. Both these birds soar and trill during the love season.

Wherever the sandy shore is relieved by patches of shingle and broken, rocky ground, we may count upon finding another very characteristic bird of the coast, the OYSTERCATCHER (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*). Its black and white plumage, long, bright orange bill, and pink legs distinguish it from all other sea-fowl; and its loud piercing whistle of *heep-heep-heep*, uttered most frequently during flight, also serves to identify this species when closer scrutiny is prevented. The Oystercatcher may often be flushed from the quiet bays and creeks, especially where a rocky beach is exposed at low water. It is very rare on all our southern English coasts during the breeding season, but in winter is more widely dispersed, many of the more northern haunts being deserted at that time. Here the pretty bird may be watched running along the sandy patches, up and down the shingle, and over the big wet stones, searching for the mussels and limpets, sand-worms and crustaceans, on which it feeds. Although so intent on feeding, it is ever wary, and dashes off long before we are near enough to work it harm—off across the bay in one long, rapid flight, or round the distant point to more secluded quarters lower down the coast. Sometimes, especially in autumn, parties of these birds may be seen, but in spring and summer it is usually met with in pairs. The Oystercatcher commences family duties in

Coasts of
Ireland and
Scotland.
South to
Yorks and
Lancs.

May, and its nest must generally be sought for on the shingly beaches. A favourite situation is just above the line of drift in some quiet bay, amongst the pebbles and coarse sand; the rougher the shingle, the better the bird seems to like the place. No nest, in the strict sense of the term, is made beyond a hollow in the sand and pebbles, which is often lined with bits of broken shells, and very rarely a scrap or two of seaweed may be arranged round the rim. What is rather remarkable is the fact of several of these "nests" often being made close to the one containing the eggs. Three eggs are generally laid, sometimes four, sometimes only two. They are buff in ground colour, spotted and streaked with dark blackish brown and pale gray. No birds are more wary during the nesting period; and long before the beach which contains their nest is reached, both male and female are flying about, uttering their shrill pipe of alarm. The eggs are difficult enough to find, as they so closely resemble the ground in colour.

Widely
distributed.
Rarer in
south in
summer.

The remarkably handsome SHELDRAKE (*Tadorna cornuta*) is another bird to be met with amongst the sand dunes of the coast. The Shel-drake is one of the shyest and wariest birds upon the coast, taking wing long before the observer is able to approach it closely, or see much of its ways without the help of a glass. The flight of this bird is very different from that of most Ducks. Those birds progress with rapid movements of the wings (except when they glide on stiff and opened pinions from the air down to the water); but the Sheldrake flies along with

slow and measured beats, more like a Heron. The Sheldrake breeds either on the mainland, among the sand dunes or links, or on a low sandy islet not far from the coast. Owing to its skulking habits during the season of reproduction it is often overlooked, and the method of its nesting also lessens the chance of discovery. The breeding season begins in May, and there can be little doubt that the bird pairs for life. The most interesting fact connected with the nidification of this species is that it makes its nest in a hole—a rabbit burrow being the usual receptacle for its eggs, although occasionally it makes a burrow for itself. At the end of this often winding tunnel, even as much as six or eight feet from the entrance, a slight nest of dry grass is formed, which, as egg after egg is laid, is warmly lined with the beautiful gray down from the parent's body. From six to twelve eggs are laid, creamy white in colour. Both birds are rarely seen near the nest together, except when one relieves the other in the task of incubation—an interesting circumstance, by the way, for the rule amongst this family of birds is for the drake to take no share in domestic duties. The Sheldrakes show their affinity with the Geese in this respect. During the breeding season, Sheldrakes often utter a tremulous or chirping note quickly repeated. The ducklings are taken to the sea by their parents soon after they are hatched; and here they are very active, especially on the wet sands, where they search for sand-hoppers, catching them every bit as adroitly as the old birds. Insects, crustaceans, worms, small fish, and the stems and leaves of

water plants and grass compose the food of the adult birds.

Widely but
very locally
distributed.

No less than four species of Terns breed upon the sandy coasts or the stretches of shingle on the rocky islands. Of these the smallest is the LESSER TERN (*Sterna minuta*). This beautiful little bird is nowhere very common, and I regret to say is fast becoming rarer. This is probably because it elects to breed on the mainland rather than on islands, where it is at the mercy of every wandering excursionist. It is among the latest of our migrants, seldom appearing at its breeding-stations before the second week in May. It spends most of its waking hours upon the wing, hawking up and down the shore and over the sea in slow, uncertain flight, dropping every now and then into the water to catch a small fish. Sometimes it may be seen walking about the sand and shingle close to the edge of the waves, searching for sand-lice, crustaceans, and insects. About a month after its arrival nesting duties are commenced. Its favourite breeding-places are on the stretches of shingle rather than the sands. Here, among the pebbles, broken shells, and drifted bits of seaweed and other shore *débris*, the three or four eggs are laid, generally without any semblance to a nest whatever, although in some cases a little hollow is either formed by the mother bird herself or selected ready for the purpose. The eggs vary from buff to grayish brown in ground colour, spotted and blotched with various shades of brown and gray; the much larger markings and rounder form prevent them from being confused with the eggs of the Ringed Plover, both birds often nesting within a short

distance of each other. It will, however, be remarked that the Tern nests on the rough shingle, the Plover on the fine sand. When their breeding-grounds are invaded by man, the Terns hover above our heads, and keep up a chorus of shrill cries which sound like *rrick*; and this circumstance will often reveal the presence of a breeding-station which might otherwise have been passed unnoted. Shortly after the young can fly, the birds begin to draw southwards, proceeding leisurely on their way to the warmer seas round Africa, where they spend the winter. The small size (length under nine inches) readily distinguishes this Tern from all its congeners.

The same evil fortune has befallen the handsome SANDWICH TERN (*S. cantiaca*) as has overtaken its small ally, and it has been banished from many a stretch of coast where in past years it used to breed in abundance. The most important colony of these birds in the British Islands is located on the famous Ferne Islands. Here, it is pleasing to record, the bird is now protected from the extermination which threatened it by the wholesale plunder of its eggs, and it bids fair to become as numerous as it was wont to be. The Sandwich Tern comes back to its summer haunts here at the end of April, although the breeding season is not in full swing before June. This bird is a most gregarious one, and the nests in some parts of the islands where it breeds are so close together that one can scarcely walk amongst them without treading on the eggs. Sometimes the nest colony is formed on the rough shingle near the sea, at others more distant

Widely but
very locally
distributed.

from the water's edge, on the rising shingle-covered ground of the island. Many nests, however, are dotted here and there amongst the coarse grass and campion. The Sandwich Tern makes a poor, untidy nest, a few bits of withered herbage strewn at the bottom of a little hollow being the usual receptacle for the eggs. It will also be remarked that the nests are most elaborate when made amongst the herbage, and when on the bare shingle a mere depression in the beach is all the provision that is made. The eggs (two or three in number) are remarkably beautiful objects, varying in ground colour from white to buff, spotted, clouded, and blotched with rich dark brown, paler brown, and gray. Sometimes an exceptionally high tide swamps the colony of nests, and then the birds usually lay again, but otherwise only one clutch is deposited. As soon as the young become strong on the wing the southern flight leisurely begins. The note of this bird is a harsh *krrick*. The food of the Sandwich Tern is composed chiefly of fish, which are caught by the birds plunging down upon them; crustaceans, sand-lice, and beetles are also eaten, especially by the nestlings.

Two other species of these elegant birds remain to be mentioned, and they are by far the most widely dispersed, the COMMON TERN (*S. hirundo*), more especially on our southern coasts; the ARCTIC TERN (*S. arctica*) being most abundant in the northern districts. Both birds are very much alike, but of the two the Common Tern is a trifle the shortest tailed, and has nearly white underparts, those of the Arctic Tern being gray. In their habits there is little

Widely
distributed.

Widely
distributed.

difference to be noted. Both display the same easy, erratic, buoyant movements in the air ; both utter a sharp *crick*-ing note, especially at the nesting-places. Both feed on small fish, crustaceans, and insects, the former of which they catch by pouncing down from the air, just like a Gannet or a Kingfisher ; both are gregarious, especially in their domestic arrangements. Both show a decided preference for an island on which to nest, rather than the shore of the mainland ; and both are migratory, arriving in April and leaving slowly in autumn, when the duties of the year are over. There are few prettier sights along the sandy coasts than a flock of Terns fishing close inshore, mayhap in some quiet bay or sea-loch, especially if we chance by good fortune to watch them from an eminence. How erratic is their buoyant flight, how small their bodies in comparison with the long, narrow wings, how brightly their plumage glistens in the sun ! They hover in a fluttering throng above the shoal of fry, first one bird dropping down like a white stone, then another, and another, the splash being distinctly heard from shore, and with a fluttering movement again rise into the air. Down and up they go as long as we are permitted to observe them, for they follow the shoal persistently, and if the fry move fast the birds are soon lost to view. Both these Terns breed in June. The Common Tern usually makes a slight nest among the herbage or on the shingle, preferring a site on higher ground a little distance from the water ; but the Arctic Tern rarely or never makes the slightest of nests, and elects to lay its eggs upon the shingle and

coarse sand close to the sea. Such, at least, is my unvaried experience of the nesting habits of each species. Both Terns lay two or three eggs, and never rear more than one brood in the season, although, if their eggs are taken or destroyed, they will usually be replaced. The eggs of the Common Tern are buff or grayish brown in ground colour, spotted and blotched with various shades of darker brown and gray. Those of the Arctic Tern are more inclined to an olive-tinted ground colour, are smaller and more elongated. The eggs are not sat upon much in the daytime during bright, hot weather, the sun helping considerably to incubate them. When their colony is invaded the birds assemble in the air in one vast fluttering throng, chattering in excitement, and swooping round the intruder until their domain is left in peace. I might just remark that both these birds in many northern stations breed close together, and at the Fernes the Sandwich Tern as well nests in close proximity.

And now with a brief glimpse at the Petrels breeding on the downy summits along the coast, we will bring our list of breeding species to a close. These birds are rarely seen on land, and without some experience of their whereabouts their nests are easily overlooked. Indeed we might spend days upon the breezy sea-downs surrounded by Petrels and yet never dream of their presence, let alone the actual whereabouts of their nests. Close observation, and wide knowledge of the birds to be met with at sea off the coast, are the only guides to success. One other fact deserves mention. Petrels are birds that love

the open ocean, that like a wide free flight, and are consequently not known to breed on any of the eastern coasts of England and Scotland. Islands and coast lines facing the open Atlantic are therefore the great strongholds of these birds, although a close scrutiny of suitable portions of the extreme south-western coasts of England may yet result in important discoveries of breeding Petrels.

One of the commonest and most wide-spread species is the MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus anglorum*). We need not dwell upon the habits of any of these birds, for they can scarcely be classed as coming within the scope of a ramble along the shore. He who would study the ways and movements of the Petrels must seek these birds at sea, far from land, where they live among the heaving billows, obtaining their food from the ocean, and rarely visiting the shore except to reproduce their species. The Manx Shearwater makes a long, often winding burrow in the loamy soil at the summit of the grassy cliffs, or in the banks that slope down to the sea. At the end of this hole a slight nest of dry grass is formed, on which the female lays her single white egg. At the entrance of the hole a heap of droppings is almost invariably to be seen. The sitting bird allows itself to be taken without making any great attempt to escape, remaining brooding over its egg until removed by the hand. The note of this bird may be expressed as *kity-coo-roo*. The general colour of the upper parts of the Manx Shearwater is black, the underparts white.

Widely
distributed.

Our next species is the STORMY PETREL

Widely
distributed.

(*Procellaria pelagica*), remarkable for being the smallest web-footed bird known to science. Its breeding season is in June; and like the preceding bird it makes a nest at the end of some old Puffin's or rabbit's burrow, under stones or amongst the crevices of ruins near the sea. The nest is slight enough, only a scrap or two of dry grass, upon which one egg is deposited, white, and rough in texture, sprinkled with tiny red specks, usually in the form of a zone round the larger end. The much more local FORK-TAILED PETREL (*P. leachi*) closely resembles the preceding species, only it is nearly twice the size, and has a deeply forked tail, that of the Stormy Petrel being nearly square. Both these birds are nearly uniform brownish black in colour, except the upper tail coverts which are white. The most important breeding-place of this bird is at St. Kilda. Here it makes its nest at the end of a disused Puffin's or Shearwater's burrow—a simple affair, composed of a few bits of dry grass, moss, or even lichen from the surrounding rocks—and the single egg is precisely similar to that of the Stormy Petrel, only proportionately larger in size. All these Petrels are more or less gregarious during the breeding season, and numbers of nests may be found within a very small area.

St. Kilda
and North
Rona, west
of Scotland.

Undoubtedly the low-lying coasts—the sandy beaches and the muddy shores, become the most interesting with the approach of autumn. These places are the great highways of migration, the grand winter resort of those birds that summer in the Arctic regions. Here, between the months

of September and March, these shores are crowded with feathered refugees from the northern snows and ice. Then, indeed, do our rambles on them assume increased interest. Say at migration time in autumn—in October and the first week in November—when we may meet with stranger birds at almost every step, and listen to their wild cries and sweeter call-notes, by day and by night, sounding clearly from the sky. Of course, during migration time the eastern coasts of the British Islands are thronged the most ; swarming with migrants from over the wild North Sea, from Scandinavia, from Denmark, from the tundras of Northern Russia—even from remote and sterile Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla. For most of the birds that travel down coast in autumn are gathered within the narrowing North Sea, from the Orkneys to Dover, as in a funnel, pressing on to our eastern sea-board in countless multitudes. Here on the cold October mornings we may see flocks of tiny GOLDCRESTS from across the sea ; migratory SHORT-EARED OWLS, just touched land after flying all night over the waste of waters ; and here and there among the long, dry grass on the sea-banks, tired-out WOODCOCKS rise on unwilling wing, loth to leave the warm shelter where they are dozing after their long, dark flight. None of these birds will remain long upon the coast—they are all bound for more inland haunts. Then flock after flock of SKYLARKS pass along ; indeed, some days from morn to night, and from night to morning again, the air is filled with a constant straggling stream of Larks, now in mighty hosts, anon in scattered

flocks—yet all flying one course, bound for the English fields. Here on our eastern coasts we may be sure of meeting with the Hooded Crow, from the middle of October onwards to the spring. Sometimes the air for days is filled with these birds migrating into our islands ; and here, on the coast, many of them live all through the winter, picking their food from the muds and from the fields adjoining the sea. They are remarkably gregarious, and in many of their habits and movements resemble Rooks. They feed on the newly sown grain, and may be seen in the pastures with Starlings and Rooks, or on the turnip fields and stubbles with Doves. They frequent the coast just as much as the fields, feeding on sand-worms, cockles, and any garbage that may be washed ashore.

Then come the REDWINGS and the FIELD-FARES, the BRAMBLINGS and the SNOW BUNTINGS—by day and by night, filling the air with their well-remembered notes, and all hastening on and on, across earth and sea, to the spots where it is their custom to live during the months of their banishment from home. Perhaps a more distinguished stranger will pass along—a GRAY SHRIKE, a LITTLE GULL, a few SHORE LARKS, or a gipsy LAPLAND BUNTING.

Then the birds whose summer haunts we have already visited, whose nests we have already seen, come down from inland haunts to spend the winter on these sandy shores. There we may meet with the CURLEW, shyer far than we found him on the moors in summer ; with the sprightly REDSHANK, with the DUNLINS, in their gray and white winter dress, now congregated into enormous

flocks, their silvery wings gleaming and sparkling in the sunshine, as the little creatures manœuvre above the muds; with the GOLDEN PLOVER, all trace of his black belly gone, conspicuous now in white and shining under plumage, although he still retains the brazen spots of his wedding days. Here are all our little friends of the hills; yet, stay, not all, for the DOTTERELS are gone to Africa, the PHALAROPES have taken their southern flight away. But with autumn's advent many stranger birds appear upon the coast—birds that do not breed with us. With a brief notice of the most prominent species and those of most regular appearance, we will bring our ramble to a close.

One of the most remarkable of these birds is the KNOT (*Tringa canutus*), a species whose breeding-place is in the highest latitudes of known land. The young birds begin to arrive on our coasts as early as the first week in August, but the great flocks, including the old birds, appear during September and October. The Knot in its winter plumage has most of the upper parts grayish brown, and the underparts nearly uniform pure white. On our coasts the Knot is eminently gregarious; and in flocks it may be seen running about the muds and sands, searching for the worms, crustaceans, and small mollusks that compose its winter fare. Sometimes mingled with the Knots and Dunlins, we may come across one or two CURLEW SAND-PIPERS (*T. subarquata*). In colour it is much like the Knot, only the rump as well as the underparts is pure white; and the bird is much the smaller, being about the size of a Dunlin.

Upon the same shores we may also find the TURNSTONE (*Streptilas interpres*), especially during the spring and autumn migration, when it passes along our coasts on its way to and from its Arctic breeding-grounds. Another pretty bird in gray and white plumage like the Knot, only smaller, and with a short black bill, is the SANDERLING (*Calidris arenaria*). It is a gentle, trustful little creature, fond of sandy beaches, where it may be found all the winter through, though most abundant during passage. All these birds are of very similar habits and movements, running nimbly about the shore, ever searching its wet surface for the creatures on which they feed. Then along the more rocky coasts—places where the beach is rough at low water—and the shingly strands, we may occasionally come across the PURPLE SANDPIPER (*Tringa maritima*), remarkable for its dark, purplish plumage and white innermost secondaries. It loves to frequent the rocks over which the waves are breaking, catching the tiny creatures left stranded by the incoming sea; and during its search for food keeps close to the very edge of the water, running over the wet, slimy rocks with remarkable agility and grace. Then we have the BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa rufa*) passing along the coast in spring and autumn, especially the latter season, but a few remain during winter too. It is readily identified by its long recurved beak and nearly uniform ash-coloured tail in winter; the latter is barred in summer plumage. Then there is the WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*), a bird like the Curlew, only smaller, with the crown of the head brown, crossed with a white mesial line, and

bordered on either side by a white eyestripe. It is another bird of regular spring and autumn passage, a few even remaining behind to breed in the Orkneys and the Shetlands, and a few remaining to winter on our southern coasts. The nesting economy of the Whimbrel is very similar to that of the Curlew, only the eggs are much smaller, but the same in general colouration. Vast numbers of GRAY PLOVERS (*Charadrius helveticus*) also pass along here, coming from the tundras of northern Europe, and a few remain to winter. They are very similar to the Golden Plover, only want the yellow spots on the upper parts which so characterise that species.

We can only give a passing glance at the great flights of northern Ducks and Geese and Swans that find winter haunts on and off these sandy coasts and mud-flats; of the flocks of SCAUPS (*Fuligula marila*) and TUFTED DUCKS (*F. cristata*); the packs of BRENT GEESE (*Anser brenta*) and BERNACLE GEESE (*A. leucopsis*); of GRAY LAGS (*A. cinereus*); PINK-FOOTED GEESE (*A. brachyrhynchus*) and BEAN GEESE (*A. segetum*); truly interesting company for him who wanders along the shore, or punts across the shallow seas and estuaries during the autumn and winter months. We must not forget to allude to the HOOPER SWAN (*Cygnus musicus*), or its smaller ally, BEWICK'S SWAN (*C. bewicki*), or to the three species of British Diver which may also be met with in the seas off these coasts during winter; but these birds are rarely, if ever, seen upon the shore. We might also dwell more fully on the grand exodus back again to the great lone northern lands of all these species, most of them in

wedding dress, but our space forbids and we must reluctantly refrain from doing so.

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Ringed Plover	Resident	Harsh <i>trrr</i> ; alarm, <i>too-it</i>	Grayish brown above, white below, head and neck black and white
Kentish Plover	April to September	Shrill <i>whit</i> ; alarm, <i>tirrrr</i>	Similar to preceding, but paler, back of head and the nape buff, black collar only indicated by patch on each side of neck
Oystercatcher .	Resident	Shrill <i>heep-heep-heep</i>	Black above, white below; wing-bar, rump, and basal portion of tail white
Sheldrake . .	Resident	Harsh <i>quack</i> ; alarm note, deep <i>kor, kor</i>	Black, white, and chestnut
Lesser Tern .	May to September	Shrill <i>rrrick</i>	Black cap, French gray above, white below; length 8½ inches
Sandwich Tern	April to September and October	Harsh <i>krrrick</i>	Black cap, French gray above (upper tail coverts and tail white), white below; length 15 inches
Common Tern	April to September and October	Sharp <i>krrrick</i>	Black cap, French gray above, white below; length 14 inches
Arctic Tern .	April to September and October	Sharp <i>krrrick</i>	Black cap, French gray above, paler gray below; length 15 inches
Manx Shearwater . . .	Resident, but rarely on land except in breeding season	Loud <i>kitty-coo-roo</i>	Black above, white below
Stormy Petrel .	Resident, but rarely on land except in breeding season	Plaintive <i>weet</i> at nesting-place	Black above, sooty brown below, sides of rump and greater portion of upper tail coverts white; tail nearly square
Fork-tailed Petrel . . .	Resident, but rarely on land except in breeding season	Shrill chirp	Black and gray above, sooty brown below, sides of rump and greater portion of upper tail coverts white; tail forked

SPECIES.	RESIDENT OR MIGRANT.	CALL OR ALARM NOTE.	PREVAILING COLOURS.
Knot . . .	August and September to May	Whistling cry	Rich chestnut, streaked and barred with black on upper parts (summer); grayish brown above, white below (winter)
Curlew Sand-piper . . .	On passage April, May, August, September, and October	Shrill <i>weet</i>	Similar to preceding
Turnstone . .	On passage chiefly; July to October, April and May. Few remain to winter	Shrill <i>keet</i> , or double note, <i>kitter-keet</i>	Strongly contrasted black, black shot with green, white, chestnut, and brown; underparts below breast white. Conspicuous white wing-bar
Sanderling . .	On passage chiefly July to October, April and May. Few remain to winter	Shrill <i>wick</i>	Black and chestnut above, below breast white (summer); gray above, white below (winter); white wing-bar
Purple Sand-piper . . .	September and October to May	Clear <i>weet</i>	Brown and chestnut above, below breast white (summer); brown glossed with purple above, grayish brown below (winter); white wing-bar
Bar-tailed God-wit . . .	On passage chiefly April and May, August to November. Few remain to winter	Shrill <i>kyä</i>	Brown and chestnut above, rich chestnut below, tail barred (summer); grayish brown above, white below, tail ash-gray (winter)
Whimbrel . .	On passage chiefly May, August, September, and October	Shrill <i>cur-lee</i> ; alarm - note, shriller double note	Brown of various shades above, white spotted with brown below, rump white, tail barred
Gray Plover .	Chiefly autumn passage, August to November. May and June less commonly.	Shrill <i>kl-ee</i> ; alarm-note, <i>köp</i>	White barred with black and brown above, black below (summer); brown barred with white above, white below (winter).

THE END.

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